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WORKS

JAMES THOMSON

VOL. III

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THE
WORKS
OF
JAMES THOMSON.

V O L. III.

THE

W O R K S

OF

JAMES THOMSON.

V O L I I I

THE
WORKS
OF
JAMES THOMSON.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CONTAINING,
SOPHONISBA,
AGAMEMNON,
AND
ALFRED.



LONDON:

Printed for A. MILLAR, opposite to *Katherine-
Street in the Strand.* M DCC L.

THE
WORKS
OF
JAMES THOMSON.

BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
MONACENSIS.

AND
A. L. F. R. E. D.



LONDON:

Printed for A. MILLAR, opposite to Kew Palace
Street in the Strand. MDCCLXXV.

SOPHONISBA.

A

TRAGEDY.

TO THE

SOCIETY OF

THE

T O T H E
Q U E E N.

M A D A M,

THE notice, your MAJESTY has condescended to take of the following *Tragedy*, emboldens me to lay it, in the humblest manner, at your MAJESTY's feet. And to whom can this illustrious *Carthaginian* so properly fly for protection, as to a QUEEN, who commands the hearts of a *people*, more powerful at sea than *Carthage*? more flourishing in *commerce* than those *first merchants*? more secure against conquest?

DEDICATION.

quest? and, under a *Monarchy*, more free than a *Commonwealth* itself?

I dare not, nor indeed need I, here attempt a character where both the great and the amiable qualities shine forth in full perfection. All words are faint to speak what is universally felt, and acknowledged, by a happy people. Permit me therefore, only to subscribe myself, with the truest zeal and veneration,

M A D A M,

Your MAJESTY'S

Most humble,

Most dutiful,

And most devoted

Servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

P R E F A C E.

IT is not my intention, in this preface, to defend any faults that may be found in the following piece. I am afraid there are too many; But those who are best able to discover, will be most ready to pardon them. They alone know how difficult an undertaking the writing of a tragedy is: and this is a first attempt.

I beg leave only to mention the reason that determined me to make choice of this subject. What pleased me particularly, tho' perhaps it will not be least liable to objection with ordinary readers, was the great simplicity of the story. It is one, regular, and uniform, not charged with a multiplicity of incidents, and yet affording several revolutions of fortune; by which the passions may be excited, varied, and driven to their full tumult of emotion.

This unity of design was always sought after, and admired by the ancients: and the most eminent among the moderns, who understood their writings, have chosen to imitate them in this, from an intire conviction that the reason of it must hold good in all ages. And here allow me to translate a Passage from the celebrated Monsieur Racine, which contains all that I have to say on this head.

“ We must not fancy that this rule has no other foundation but the caprice of those who made it. Nothing can touch us in tragedy, but what is probable. And what probability is there, that, in one Day, should happen a multitude of things, which could scarce happen in several Weeks? There are some who think that this simplicity is a mark of barrenness of invention. But they do not consider, that, on the contrary, invention consists of
B 3 “ making

P R E F A C E.

*“ making something out of nothing : and that this huddle
“ of incidents has always been the refuge of Poets, who
“ did not find in their genius either richness or force enough
“ to engage their spectators, for five acts together, by a
“ simple action, supported by the violence of passions, the
“ beauty of sentiments, and the nobleness of expression.”—*
I would not be understood to mean that all these things are to be found in my performance : I only shew the reader what I aimed at, and how I would have pleased him, had it been in my power.

As to the character of Sophonisba ; in drawing it, I have confined myself to the truth of history. It were an affront to the age, to suppose such a character out of nature ; especially in a country which has produced so many great examples of public spirit and heroic virtues, even in the softer sex : and I had destroyed her character intirely, had I not marked it with that strong love to her country, disdain of servitude, and inborn aversion to the Romans, by which all historians have distinguished her. Nor ought her marrying Masinissa, while her former husband was still alive, to be reckoned a blemish in her character. For, by the laws both of Rome and Carthage, the captivity of the Husband dissolved the marriage of course ; as among us impotence, or adultery ; not to mention the reasons of a moral and public nature, which I have put into her own mouth in the scene betwixt her and Syphax.

This is all I have to say of the play itself. But I cannot conclude without owning my obligations to those concerned in the representation. They have indeed done me more than justice. Whatever was designed as amiable and engaging in Masinissa shines out in Mr. Wilks's action. Mrs. Oldfield, in the character of Sophonisba, has excelled what, even in the fondness of an author, I could either wish or imagine. The grace, dignity, and happy variety of her action have been universally applauded, and are truly admirable.

P R O.

PROLOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mr. WILLIAMS.

WHEN Learning, after the long Gothic night,
Fair, o'er the western world, renew'd its light,
With arts arising Sophonisba rose :

The tragic muse, returning, swept her woes.
With her th' Italian scene first learn'd to glow ;
And the first Tears for her were taught to flow.
Her charms the Gallic muses next inspir'd :
Corneille himself saw, wonder'd, and was fir'd.

What foreign theatres with pride have shewn,
Britain, by juster title, makes her own.
When Freedom is the cause, 'tis hers to fight ;
And hers, when Freedom is the theme, to write.

For this a British Author bids again
The heroine rise, to grace the British scene.
Here, as in life, she breathes her genuine flame :
She asks what bosom has not felt the same ?
Asks of the British Youth — Is silence there ?
She dares to ask it of the British Fair.

To night, our home-spun author would be true,
At once, to nature, history, and you.
Well-pleas'd to give our neighbours due applause,
He owns their learning, but disdains their laws.
Not to his patient touch, or happy flame,
'Tis to his British heart he trusts for fame.
If France excel him in one free-born thought,
The man, as well as poet, is in fault.

Nature ! informer of the poet's art,
Whose force alone can raise or melt the heart,
Thou art his guide ; each passion, every line,
Whate'er he draws to please must all, be thine.
Be thou his judge : in every candid breast,
Thy silent whisper is the sacred test.

The Persons represented.

MASINISSA, King of <i>Messyia</i> ,	} by {	Mr. Wilks.
SYPHAX, King of <i>Masæsyia</i> ,		Mr. Mills.
NARVA, Friend to <i>Masinissa</i> ,		Mr. Roberts.
SCIPIO, the Roman General,		Mr. Williams.
LÆLIUS, his Lieutenant,		Mr. Bridgwater.
SOPHONISBA,		Mrs. Oldfield.
PHOENISSA, her Friend,		Mrs. Roberts.

Messenger, Slave, Guards, and Attendants.

S C E N E

The Palace of *CIRTHA*.

SOPHONISBA.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

SOPHONISBA.

THIS hour, *Phœnissa*, this important hour,
Or fixes me a queen, or from a throne
Throws *Sophonisba* into *Roman* chains.

Detested thought! For now his utmost force
Collected, desperate, distress'd, and fore
From battles lost; with all the rage of war,
Ill-fated *Syphax* his last effort makes.

But say, thou partner of my hopes and fears,
Phœnissa, say; while, from the lofty tower,

Our straining eyes the field of battle fought,
 Ah, thought you not that our *Numidian* troops
 Gave up the bloody field, and scattering fled,
 Wild o'er the hills, from the rapacious sons
 Of still triumphant *Rome*?

PHOENISSA.

Perhaps they wheel'd,
 As is their custom, to return more fierce.
 Distrust not Fortune, while you yet may hope;
 And think not, madam, *Syphax* can resign,
 But with his ebbing life, in this last field,
 At once a kingdom, and a queen he loves
 Beyond ambition's brightest wish; for whom,
 Nor mov'd by threats, nor bound by plighted faith,
 He scorn'd the *Roman* friendship (that fair name
 For slavery) and from th' engagements broke
 Of *Scipio*, fam'd for every winning art,
 The towering Genius of recover'd *Rome*.

SOPHONISBA.

Oh name him not! These *Romans* stir my blood
 To too much rage. I cannot bear the fortune
 Of that proud people. — Said you not, *Phœnissa*,
 That *Syphax* lov'd me; which would fire his soul,
 And urge him on to death or conquest? True,
 He loves me with the madness of desire;
 His every passion is a slave to love;
 Nor heeds he danger where I bid him go,
 Nor leagues, nor interest. Hence these endless wars,
 These ravag'd countries, these successless fights,
 Sustain'd

Sustain'd for *Carthage*; whose defence alone,
 Not love, engag'd my marriage-vows with his.
 But know you not, that in the *Roman* camp
 I have a lover too; a gallant, brave,
 And disappointed lover, full of wrath,
 Returning to a kingdom, whence the sword
 Of *Sypbax* drove him?

PHOENISSA.

Masiniſſa?

SOPHONISBA.

He:

Young *Masiniſſa*, the *Maffylian* king,
 The first addresser of my youth; for whom
 My bosom felt a fond beginning wish,
 Extinguish'd soon; when once by *Scipio's* arts
 Won over, he became the slave of *Rome*.
 E'er since, my heart has held him in contempt;
 And thrown out each idea of his worth,
 That there began to grow: nay had it been
 As much enthrall'd, and soft, as her's who sits
 In secret shades, or by the falling stream,
 And wastes her being in unutter'd pangs,
 I would have broke, or cur'd it of its fondness.

PHOENISSA.

Heroic *Sophonisba*!

SOPHONISBA.

No, *Phœniſſa*;

It is not for the daughter of great *Asdrubal*,
 Descended from a long illustrious line

Of *Carthaginian* heroes, who have oft
 Fill'd *Italy* with terror and dismay,
 And shook the walls of *Rome*, to pine in love,
 Like a deluded maid; to give her life,
 And heart high-beating in her country's cause,
 To mean domestic cares, and idle joys,
 Much less to one who stoops his neck to *Rome*,
 An enemy to *Carthage*, *Masinissa*.

PHOENISSA.

Think not I mean to check that glorious flame,
 That just ambition which exalts your soul,
 Glows on your cheek, and lightens in your eye.
 Yet would he had been yours, this rising prince!
 For, trust me, Fame is fond of *Masinissa*.
 His courage, conduct, deep-experienc'd youth,
 And vast unbroken spirit in distress,
 Still rising stronger from the last defeat,
 Are all the talk and terror too of *Afric*.

Who has not heard the story of his woes?
 How hard he came to his paternal realm:
 Whence soon by *Syphax*'s unrelenting hate,
 And jealous *Carthage* driven, he with a few
 Fled to the mountains. Then, I think, it was,
 Hem'd in a circle of impending rocks,
 That all his followers fell, save fifty horse;
 Who, thence escap'd thro' secret paths abrupt,
 Gain'd the *Clupean* plain. There overtook,
 And urg'd by fierce surrounding foes, he burst
 With four alone, sore wounded, thro' their ranks,

And

And all amidst a deep-swoln torrent plung'd.
 Seiz'd with the whirling gulph, two sunk ; and two,
 With him obliquely hurried down the stream,
 Swam to the farther shore. Th' astonish'd foes
 Stood check'd and shivering on the gloomy brink,
 And deem'd him lost in the devouring flood.
 Mean time the dauntless, undespairing youth
 Lay in a cave conceal'd ; curing his wounds
 With mountain-herbs, and on his horses fed :
 Nor here, even at the lowest ebb of life,
 Stoop'd his aspiring mind. What need I say,
 How once again restor'd, and once again
 Expell'd, among the *Garamantian* hills
 He since has wander'd, till the *Roman* arm
 Reviv'd his cause ? and who shall reign alone,
Syphax or he, this day decides.

SOPHONISBA.

Enough.

Thou need'st not blazon thus his fame, *Phœnissa*.
 Were he as glorious as the pride of woman
 Could wish, in all her wantonness of thought ;
 The joy of humankind ; wise, valiant, good ;
 With every praise, with every laurel crown'd ;
 The warrior's wonder, and the virgin's sigh :
 Yet this would cloud him o'er, this blemish all,
 His mean submission to the *Roman* yoke ;
 That, false to *Carthage*, *Afric*, and himself,
 With proffer'd hand and knee, he hither led
 These ravagers of earth.——But while we talk,

The

The work of fate goes on ; even now perhaps
My dying country bleeds in every vein,
And the proud victor thunders at our gate.

SCENE II.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA, *and to them a MESSENGER from the Battle.*

SOPHONISBA.

Ha ! Whence art thou ? Speak, tho' thy bleeding
wounds

Might well excuse thy tongue.

MESSENGER.

Madam escap'd,

From yon dire field, alas ! I come——

SOPHONISBA.

No more.

At once thy meaning flashes o'er my soul.

Oh all my vanish'd hopes ! oh fatal chance

Of undiscerning war !—And is all lost ?

An universal ruin ?

MESSENGER.

Madam, all.

Of all our numerous host scarce one is saved.

The King——

SOPHONISBA.

Ah ! what of him ?

Mes-

MESSENGER.

His fiery steed,
By *Masinissa*, the *Massylian* prince,
Pierc'd, threw him headlong to his clustering foes ;
And now he comes in chains.

SOPHONISBA.

Oh worst of ills !
Absolute gods ! All *Afric* is in chains !
The weeping world in chains !—Oh is there not
A time, a righteous time, reserv'd in fate,
When these oppressors of mankind shall feel
The miseries they give ; and blindly fight
For their own fetters too ?—The conquering troops,
How points their motion ?

MESSENGER.

At my heels they came,
Loud-shouting, dreadful in a cloud of dust,
By *Masinissa* headed.

SOPHONISBA.

Hark ! arriv'd.
The murmuring croud rolls frightened to the palace.
Thou bleed'st to death poor faithful wretch, away,
And dress thy wounds, if life be worth thy care ;
'Tho' *Rome*, methinks, will lose a slave in thee.
Would *Sophonisba* were as near the verge
Of boundless, and immortal liberty !

S C E N E

SCENE III.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

[After a Pause.]

SOPHONISBA.

And wherefore not? When liberty is lost,
 Let abject cowards live; but in the brave
 It were a treachery to themselves, enough
 To merit chains. And is it fit for me,
 Who in my veins, from *Asdrubal* deriv'd,
 Hold *Carthaginian* enmity to *Rome*;
 Who sold my joyless youth to *Syphax*' arms,
 For her destruction; is it fit for me
 To sit in feeble grief, and trembling wait
 Th' approaching victor's rage; reserv'd in chains
 To grace his triumph, and become the scorn
 Of every *Roman* dame—Gods! how my soul
 Disdains the thought! This, this shall set it free.
 [Offers to stab herself.]

PHOENISSA.

Hold, *Sophonisba*, hold! my friend! my queen!
 For whom alone I live! hold your rash hand,
 Nor thro' your guardian bosom stab your country.
 That is our last resort, and always sure.
 The gracious gods are liberal of death;
 To that last blessing lend a thousand ways.
 Think not I'd have you live to drag a chain,

And

And walk the triumph of insulting *Rome*.
 No, by these tears of loyalty and love!
 E're I beheld so vile a fight, this hand
 Should urge the faithful ponyard to your heart,
 And glory in the deed. But, while hope lives,
 Let not the generous die. 'Tis late before
 The brave despair.

SOPHONISBA.

Thou copy of my soul!
 And now my friend indeed! Shew me but hope,
 One glimpse of hope, and I'll renew my toils,
 Call patience, labour, fortitude again,
 The vext unjoyous day, and sleepless night;
 Nor shrink at danger, any shape of death,
 Shew me the smallest hope! Alas, *Phœnissa*,
 Too fondly confident! Hope lives not here,
 Fled with her sister Liberty beyond
 The *Garamantian* hills, to some steep wild,
 Some undiscover'd country, where the foot
 Of *Roman* cannot come.

PHOENISSA.

Yes, there she liv'd
 With *Masiniſſa* wounded and forlorn,
 Amidst the serpents hiss, and tigers yell. —

SOPHONISBA.

Why nam'st thou him?

PHOENISSA.

Madam, in this forgive
 My forward zeal; from him proceeds our hope.

He

He lov'd you once ; nor is your form impair'd,
 Time has matur'd it into stronger charms:
 Ask his protection from the *Roman* power,
 You must prevail ; for *Sophonisba* sure
 From *Masiniſſa* cannot ask in vain.

SOPHONISBA.

Now, by the prompting Genius of my country !
 I thank thee for the thought. True, there is pain
 Ev'n in descending thus to beg protection
 From that degenerate youth. But, oh ! for thee,
 My sinking country, and again to gaul
 This hated *Rome*, what would I not endure ?
 It shall be done, *Phœniſſa* ; tho' disgust
 Hold back my struggling heart, it shall be done.

But hark : they come ; in this disordered tumult
 It fits not *Sophonisba* to be seen.
 I'll wait a calmer hour.—Let us retire.

SCENE IV.

MASINIſſA, SYPHAX in Chains, NARVA,
 Guards, &c.

SYPHAX.

Is there no dungeon in this city, dark,
 As is my troubled soul ? That thus I'm brought
 To my own palace, to those rooms of state,

Wont

Wont in another manner to receive me,
With other signs of royalty than these.

(*looking on his chains.*)

MASINISSA.

I will not wound thee, nor insult thee, *Syphax*,
With a recital of thy tyrant crimes.
A captive here I see thee, fallen below
My most revengeful wish ; and all the rage,
The noble fury that this morn inflam'd me,
Is sunk to soft compassion. In the field,
The perilous front of war, there is the scene
Of brave revenge ; and I have fought thee there,
Keen as the wounded lyon seeks his foe.
But when a broken enemy, disarm'd,
And helpless lies ; a falling sword, an eye
With pity flowing, and an arm as weak
As infant softness, then becomes the brave.

Believe it, *Syphax*, my relenting soul
Melts at thy fate.

SYPHAX.

This, this, is all I dread,
All I detest, this insolence refin'd,
This affectation of superior goodness.
Pitied by thee ! — Is there a form of death,
Of torture, and of infamy like that ?
Ye partial gods, to what have you debas'd me ?
I feel your worst ; why should I fear you more ?

Hear me, vain youth ! take notice — I abhor
Thy mercy, loath it. — Use me like a slave ;

As

As I would thee, (delicious thought!) wert thou
Here crouching in my power.

MASINISSA.

Outrageous man!
'Thou can'st not drive me, by thy bitterest rage
To an unmanly deed; not all thy wrongs,
Can force my patient soul to stain its virtue.

SYPHAX.
I cannot wrong thee. When we drive the spear
Into the monster's heart, to crush the serpent;
Can that be call'd a wrong? 'Tis self-defence.

MASINISSA.
I'm loth to hurt thee more.—The tyrant works
Too fierce already in thy rankled breast.
But since thou seem'st to rank me with thy self,
With great destroyers, with perfidious kings;
I must reply to thy licentious tongue,
Bid thee remember, whose accursed sword
Began this work of death; who broke the ties,
The holy ties, attested by the gods,
Which bind the nations in the bond of peace;
Who meanly took advantage of my youth,
Unskill'd in arms, unsettled on my throne,
And drove me to the desert, there to dwell
With kinder monsters; who my cities sack'd,
My country pillag'd, and my subjects murder'd;
Who still pursu'd me with inveterate hate,
When open force prov'd vain, with ruffian arts,
The villain's dagger, base assassination.

And

And for no reason all. Brute violence
Alone thy plea.—What the least provocation,
Say, canst thou but pretend?

SYPHAX.

I needed none.

Nature has in my being sown the seeds
Of enmity to thine.—Nay mark me this ;
Couldst thou restore me to my former state,
Strike off these chains, give me my crown again ;
Yet must I still, implacable to thee,
Seek eagerly thy death, or die my self.
Life cannot hold us both !—Unequal gods !
Who love to disappoint mankind, and take
All vengeance to your selves ; why to the point
Of my long-flatter'd wishes did ye lift me ;
Then sink me down so low ? Just as I aim'd
The glorious stroke that was to make me happy,
Why did you blast my strong extended arm ?
But that to mock us is your cruel sport ?
What else is human life ?

MASINISSA.

Thus always join'd
With an inhuman heart, and brutal manners,
Is irreligion to the ruling gods ;
Whose schemes our peevish ignorance arraigns,
Our thoughtless pride.—Thy lost condition, *Syphax*,
Is nothing to the tumult of thy breast.
There lies the sting of evil, there the drop
That poisons nature.—Ye mysterious powers !

Whose

Whose ways are ever-gracious, ever-just,
 As ye think wisest, best, dispose of me ;
 But, whether thro' your gloomy depths I wander,
 Or on your mountains walk ; give me the calm
 The steady, smiling soul ; where wisdom sheds,
 Eternal sunshine and eternal peace.
 Then, if misfortune comes, she brings along
 The bravest virtues. And so many great
 Illustrious spirits have convers'd with woe,
 Have in her school been taught, as are enough
 To consecrate distress, and make Ambition
 Even with the Frown beyond the smile of Fortune.

SYPHAX.

Torture and racks ! This is the common trick
 Of insolent success, unsuffering pride,
 This prate of patience, and I know not what.
 'Tis all a lie, impracticable rant ;
 And only tends to make me scorn thee more.

But why this talk ? In mercy send me hence ;
 Yet — ere I go — Oh save me from distraction !
 I know, hot youth, thou burnest for my queen ;
 But by the majesty of ruin'd kings,
 And that commanding glory which surrounds her,
 I charge thee touch her not !

MASINISSA.

No, *Syphax*, no.
 Thou need'st not charge me. That were mean indeed,
 A triumph that to thee. But could I stoop
 Again to love her ; Thou, what right hast thou,

A

A captive, to her bed? Thy bonds divorce
And free her from thy power. All laws in this,
Roman and Carthaginian, all agree.

SYPHAX.

Here, here, begins the bitterness of ruin,
Here my chains grind me first!

MASINISSA.

Poor *Sophonisba*!

She too becomes the prize of conquering *Rome*;
What most her heart abhors. Alas, how hard
Will slavery fit on her exalted soul!
She never will endure it, she will die.
For not a *Roman* burns with nobler ardor,
A higher sense of liberty than she;
And tho' she marry'd thee, her only stain,
False to my youth, and faithless to her vows;
Yet I must own it, from a worthy cause,
From publick spirit, did her fault proceed.

SYPHAX.

Must I then hear her praise from thee? Confusion!
Oh! for a lonely dungeon! where I rather
Would talk with my own groans, and breathe revenge,
Than in the mansions of the blest with thee.
Hell! Whither must I go?

MASINISSA.

Unhappy man!

And is thy breast determin'd against peace,
On comfort shut?

SYPHAX.

On all, but death, from thee.

MA-

MASINISSA.

Narva, be *Syphax* thy peculiar care ;
And use him well with tenderness and honour.
This evening *Lælius*, and to morrow *Scipio*,
To *Cirthea* comes. Then let the *Romans* take
Their prisoner.

SYPHAX.

There shines a gleam of hope
Across the gloom—From thee deliver'd!—Ease
Breathes in that thought—Lead on—My heart grows
lighter!

SCENE V.

MASINISSA.

What dreadful havock in the human breast
The passions make, when unconfin'd, and mad,
They burst unguided by the mental eye,
The light of reason, which in various ways
Points them to good, or turns them back from ill!

O save me from the tumult of the soul!
From the wild beasts within!—For circling sands,
When the swift whirlwind whelms them o'er the lands;
The roaring deeps that to the clouds arise,
While through the storm the darting lightning flies;
The monster-brood to which this land gives birth,
The blazing city, and the gaping earth;
All deaths, all tortures, in one pang combin'd,
Are gentle to the tempest of my mind.

The End of the First Act.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

MASINISSA.

THOU good old man, by whom my youth was
form'd,

The firm companion of my various life,
I own, 'tis true, that *Sophonisba's* image
Lives in my bosom still; and at each glance
I take in secret of the bright idea,
A strange disorder seizes on my soul,
Which burns with stronger glory. Need I say,
How once she had my vows? Till *Scipio* came,
Resistless man! like a descending God,
And snatched me from the *Carthaginian* side
To nobler *Rome*; beneath whose laurel'd brow,
And fav'ring eye, the nations grow polite,
Humane and happy. Then thou may'st remember,
Such is this woman's high impetuous spirit,
That all-controuling love she bears her country,
Her *Carthage*; that for this she sacrific'd
To *Syphax*, unbelov'd, her blooming years,
And won him off from *Rome*.

NARVA.

My generous prince!

VOL. II.

C

Applauding

Applauding *Afric* of thy choice approves.
 Fame claps her wings, and virtue smiles on thee,
 Of peace thou softner, and thou soul of war!
 But oh beware of that fair foe to glory,
 Woman! and most of *Carthaginian* woman!
 Who has not heard of fatal *Punic* guile?
 Of their stoln conquests? their insidious leagues?
 Their *Asdrubals*? their *Hannibals*? with all
 Their wily heroes? And, if such their men,
 What must their women be?

MASINISSA.

You make me smile.

I thank thy honest zeal. But never dread
 The firmness of my heart, the strong attachment,
 I hold to *Rome*, to *Scipio*, and to Glory.
 Indeed, I cannot, would not quite forget
 The grace of *Sophonisba*; how she look'd
 And talk'd, and mov'd, a *Pallas*, or a *Juno*!
 Accomplish'd even in trifles, when she stoop'd
 From higher thoughts, and with a soften'd eye
 Gave her quick spirit into gayer life.
 Then every word was liveliness, and wit;
 We heard the Muses' song; and the dance swam
 Thro' all the maze of harmony. Believe me
 I do not flatter; yet my panting soul
 To *Scipio*'s friendship, to the fair pursuit
 Of fame, and for my people's happiness,
 Resign'd this *Sophonisba*; and tho' now
 Constrain'd by sweet necessity to see her,

A

A captive in my power, yet will I still
 Resign her.

NARVA.

I'll not doubt thy fortitude,
 My *Masinissa*, thy exalted purpose
 Not to be lost in love ; but ah ! we know not,
 Oft, till experience sighs it to the soul,
 The boundless witchcraft of ensnaring woman,
 And our own slippery hearts. From *Scipio* learn
 The temperance of heroes. I'll recount
 Th' instructive story, what these eyes beheld ;
 Perhaps you've heard it ; but 'tis pleasing still,
 Tho' told a thousand times.

MASINISSA.

I burn to hear it.
 Lost by my late misfortunes in the desert,
 I liv'd a stranger to the voice of fame,
 To *Scipio's* last exploits. Indulge me now.
 Great Actions, ev'n recounted, raise the mind ;
 But when a friend has done them, then, my *Narva*,
 They doubly charm us ; then with more than wonder,
 Even with a sort of vanity we listen.

NARVA.

When to his glorious, first essay in war,
 New *Carthage* fell ; there all the flower of *Spain*
 Were kept in hostage ; a full field presenting
 For *Scipio's* generosity to shine.

And then it was, that when the heroe heard
 How I to thee belong'd, he with large gifts,

And friendly words dismiss'd me.

MASINISSA.

I remember.

And in his favour That engag'd me first.

But to thy story.

NARVA.

What with admiration

Struck every heart was this—A noble virgin,
 Conspicuous far o'er all the captive dames,
 Was mark'd the general's prize. She wept, and blush'd,
 Young, fresh, and blooming like the morn. An eye,
 As when the blue sky trembles through a cloud
 Of purest white. A secret charm combin'd
 Her features, and infus'd enchantment through them.
 Her shape was harmony.—But eloquence
 Beneath her beauty fails; which seem'd on purpose,
 By nature lavish'd on her, that mankind
 Might see the virtue of a heroë tried
 Almost beyond the stretch of human force.
 Soft as she pass'd along, with downcast eyes,
 Where gentle sorrow swell'd, and now and then
 Dropt o'er her modest cheek a trickling tear.
 The *Roman* legions languish'd; and hard war
 Felt more than pity. Ev'n their chief himself,
 As on his high tribunal rais'd he sat,
 Turn'd from the dangerous fight, and chiding ask'd
 His officers, if by this gift they meant
 To cloud his glory in its very dawn.

MASI-

M A S I N I S S A.

Oh Gods ! my fluttering heart ! On, stop not, *Narva*.

N A R V A.

She, question'd of her birth, in trembling accents,
 With tears and blushes broken, told her tale.
 But when he found her royally descended,
 Of her old captive parents the sole joy ;
 And that a hapless *Celtiberian* prince,
 Her lover and belov'd, forgot his chains,
 His lost dominions, and for her alone
 Wept out his tender soul ; sudden the heart
 Of this young, conquering, loving, godlike *Roman*
 Felt all the great divinity of virtue.
 His wishing youth stood check'd, his tempting power,
 Restrain'd by kind humanity. — at once
 He for her parents and her lover call'd.
 The various scene imagine : how his troops
 Look'd dubious on, and wonder'd what he meant ;
 While stretch'd below the trembling suppliants lay,
 Rack'd by a thousand mingling passions, fear,
 Hope, jealousy, disdain, submission, grief,
 Anxiety, and love in every shape.
 To these as different sentiments succeeded,
 As mixt emotions, when the man divine
 Thus the dread silence to the lover broke.

“ We both are young, both charm'd. The right of
 “ war

“ Has put thy beauteous mistress in my power ;

C 3

“ With

“ With whom I could in the most sacred ties
 “ Live out a happy life : but know that *Romans*
 “ Their hearts as well as enemies can conquer.
 “ Then take her to thy soul ; and with her take
 “ Thy liberty and kingdom. In return
 “ I ask but this. When you behold these eyes,
 “ These charms, with transport ; be a friend to *Rome*.

MASINISSA.

There spoke the soul of *Scipio* — But the Lovers ?

NARVA.

Joy and ecstatic wonder held them mute ;
 While the loud camp, and all the clustring crowd,
 That hung around, rang with repeated shouts.
 Fame took th’ alarm, and thro’ resounding *Spain*
 Blew fast the fair report ; which, more than arms,
 Admiring nations to the *Romans* gain’d.

MASINISSA.

My friend in glory ! thy awaken’d prince
 Springs at thy noble tale. It fires my soul,
 And nerves each thought anew ; apt oft perhaps,
 Too much, too much, to slacken into love.
 But now the soft oppression flies ; and all
 My mounting powers expand to deeds like these.
 Who, who would live, my *Narva*, just to breathe
 This idle air, and indolently run,
 Day after day, the still-returning round
 Of life’s mean offices, and sickly joys ?
 But, in the service of mankind, to be
 A guardian god below — Still to employ

The

The mind's brave ardour in heroic aims,
 Such as may raise us o'er the groveling herd,
 And make us shine for ever, That is life.
 Bleed every vein about me; every nerve
 With anguish tremble; every sinew ake;
 The third time may I lose my crown; again
 Wander the false inhospitable Syrts;
 If, to reward my toils, the god will grant me
 To share the wreath of fame on *Scipio's* brow.

But see, she comes, the beauteous *Sophonisba*!
 Behold, my friend, mark her majestic port!

S C E N E II.

MASINISSA, SOPHONISBA, NARVA, PHOENISSA.

SOPHONISBA.

Behold, victorious prince! the scene revers'd;
 And *Sophonisba* kneeling here; a captive,
 O'er whom the Gods, thy fortune, and thy virtue,
 Give thee unquestion'd power of life and death.
 If such a one may raise her suppliant voice,
 Once music to thy ear; if she may touch
 Thy knee, thy purple, and thy victor-hand;
 Oh listen, *Masinissa*! Let thy soul
 Intensely listen! While I fervent pray,
 And strong adjure thee, by that regal state,
 In which with equal pomp we lately shone;

By the *Numidian* name, our common boast,
 And by those household gods ; who may, I wish,
 With better omens take thee to this palace,
 Than *Syphax* hence they sent. As is thy pleasure,
 In all beside determine of my fate.

This, this alone I beg. Never, oh never !
 Into the cruel, proud, and hated power
 Of *Romans* let me fall. Since angry heaven
 Will have it so, that I must be a slave,
 And that a galling chain must bind these hands
 It were some little softning in my doom,
 To call a kindred son of the same clime,
 A native of *Numidia*, my lord.

But if thou canst not save me from the *Romans*,
 If this sad favour be beyond thy power ;
 At least to give me death is what thou canst.
 Here strike — my naked bosom courts thy sword ;
 And my last breath shall bless thee, *Masinissa* !

MASINISSA.

Rise, *Sophonisha*, rise. To see thee thus
 Is a revenge I scorn ; and all the man
 Within me, though much injur'd by thy pride,
 And spirit too tempestuous for thy sex,
 Yet blushes to behold thus at my feet,
 Thus prostrate low, her, for whom kings have kneel'd,
 The fairest, but the falsest of her sex.

SOPHONISBA.

Spare thy reproach.—'Tis cruel thus to lose
 In rankling discord, and ungenerous strife,

The

The few remaining moments that divide me
 From the most loath'd of evils, *Roman* bondage !
 Yes, shut thy heart against me ; shut thy heart
 Against compassion, every human thought,
 Even recollected love : yet know, rash youth !
 That when thou seest me swell their lofty triumph,
 Thou seest thy self in me. This is my day ;
 To morrow will be thine. But here, be sure,
 Here will I lie on this vile earth, forlorn,
 Of hope abandon'd, since despis'd by thee ;
 These locks all loose and fordid in the dust ;
 This sullied bosom growing to the ground,
 Till the remorseless soldier comes, more fierce
 From recent blood, and in thy very eye,
 Lays raging his rude sanguinary grasp
 On these weak limbs ; and tortures them with chains.
 Then if no friendly steel, no nectar'd draught
 Of deadly poison, can enlarge my soul ;
 It will indignant burst from a slave's body ;
 And, join'd to mighty *Dido*, scorn ye all.

MASINISSA.

Oh *Sophonisba* ! 'tis not safe to hear thee ;
 And I mistook my heart, to trust it thus.
 Hence let me fly.

SOPHONISBA.

You shall not, *Masinissa* !
 Here will I hold you, tremble here for ever ;
 Here unremitting grow, till you consent.
 And can'st thou think, oh ! canst thou think to leave me,
 C 5 — Expos'd,

Expos'd, defenceless, wretched, here alone,
 A prey to *Romans* flush'd with blood and conquest,
 The subject of their scorn or baser love?
 Sure *Masiniſſa* cannot; and, tho' chang'd,
 Tho' cold as that averted look he wears;
 Sure love can ne'er in generous breasts be lost
 To that degree, as not from shame and outrage
 To save what once they lov'd.

MASINIſſA.

Enchantment! Madness!
 What would'st thou, *Sophonisba*? — Oh my heart!
 My treacherous heart!

SOPHONISBA.

What would I, *Masiniſſa*?
 My mean request sits blushing on my cheek.
 To be thy slave, young prince, is what I beg;
 Here *Sophonisba* kneels to be thy slave;
 Yet kneels in vain. But thou'rt a slave thyself,
 And canst not from the *Romans* save one woman;
 Her, who was once the triumph of thy soul;
 Ere they seduc'd it by their lying glory.
 Immortal gods! and am I fallen so low?
 Scorn'd by a lover? by the man whom once
 My heart, alas! too much inclin'd to love,
 Before he sunk into the slave of *Rome*?
 Nought can be worth this baseness, life, nor empire!
 I loath me for it.—On this kinder earth,
 Then leave me, leave me, to despair and death!

MASINIſſA.

I cannot bear her Tears.—Rise, quickly rise,

In

In all the conquering majesty of charms,
 O *Sophonisba*, rise ! while here I swear,
 By the tremendous powers that rule mankind !
 By heaven and earth, and hell ! by love and glory !
 The *Romans* shall not hurt you — *Romans* cannot ;
 For *Rome* is generous as the gods themselves,
 And honours, not insults, a generous foe.
 Yet since you dread them, take this royal hand,
 The pledge of surety, by which kings are bound ;
 By which I hold you mine, and vow to treat you,
 With all the softness of remember'd love,
 All that can sooth thy fate, and make thee happy.

SOPHONISBA.

I thank thee, *Masiniſſa* ! now the same,
 The same bright youth, exalted, full of soul ;
 With whom in happier days I us'd to pass
 The tender hour ; while, dawning fair in love,
 All song and sweetness, life set joyous out ;
 Ere the black tempest of ambition rose,
 And drove us different ways.—Thus drest in war,
 In nodding plumes, o'ercaſt with ſullen thought,
 With purpos'd vengeance dark, I knew thee not ;
 But now breaks out the beauteous ſun anew,
 The gay *Numidian* ſhines, who warm'd me once,
 Whoſe love was glory.—Vain ideas, hence !
 —Long ſince, my heart, to nobler paſſions known,
 Has your acquaintance ſcorn'd.

MASINIſſA.

Oh ! while you talk,

C 6

Enchanting

Enchanting fair one! my deluded thought
 Runs back to days of love; when fancy still
 Found worlds of beauty, ever rising new
 To the transported eye; when flattering hope
 Form'd endless prospects of encreasing bliss;
 And still the credulous heart believ'd them all,
 Even more than love could promise.—But the scene
 Is full of danger for a youthful eye;
 I must not, dare not, will not look that way.
 O hide it, wisdom, glory, from my view!
 Or in sweet ruin I shall sink again.

Distemper clouds thy cheek; thy colour goes.
 Retire, and from the troubles of the day
 Repose thy weary soul, worn out with care,
 And rough unhappy thought.

SOPHONISBA.

May *Masiniſſa*

Ne'er want the goodness he has shewn to me.

S C E N E III.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

MASINISSA.

The danger's o'er, I've heard the *Siren's* song,
 Yet still to virtue hold thy steady course.
 I mark'd thy kind concern, my friendly fears,
 And own them just; for she has beauty, *Narva*,

So full, so perfect, with so great a soul
 Inform'd, so rais'd with animating spirit,
 As strikes like lightning from the hand of *Jove*,
 And raises love to glory.

NARVA.

Ah, my Prince!
 Too true, it is too true; her fatal charms
 Are powerful, and to *Masinissa's* heart
 Know but too well the way. And art thou sure,
 That the soft poison, which within thy veins
 Lay unextinguish'd, is not rouz'd anew,
 Is not this moment working through thy soul?
 Dost thou not love? Confess.

MASINISSA.

What said my friend,
 Of poison? love? of loving *Sophonisba*?
 Yes, I admire her, wonder at her beauty,
 And he who does not is as dull as earth,
 The cold unanimated form of man,
 Ere lighted up with the celestial fire.
 Where'er she goes still admiration gazes,
 And listens while she talks. Even thou thy self,
 Who saw'st her with the malice of a friend,
 Ev'n thou thy self admir'st her.—Dost thou not?
 Say, speak sincerely.

NARVA.

She has charms indeed;
 But has she charms like virtue? Tho' majestic;
 Does she command us with a force like glory?

MAE

MASINISSA.

All Glory in her eye ! Perfection thence
 Looks from its throne ; and on her ample brow
 Sits majesty. Her features glow with life,
 Warm with heroic soul. Her mien !—she walks,
 As when a towering goddess treads this earth.
 But when her language flows ; when such a mind
 Descends to sooth, to sigh, to weep, to grasp
 The tottering knee ; oh ! *Narva, Narva, oh !*
 Expression here is dumb.

NARVA.

Alas ! my Lord,
 Is this the talk of sober admiration ?
 Are these the sallies of a heart at ease ?
 Of *Scipio's* friend ? Is this thy steady virtue ?

MASINISSA.

I tell thee once again, too cautious man,
 That when a woman begs, a matchless woman,
 A woman once belov'd, a fallen queen,
 A *Sophonisba* ! when she twines her charms
 Around our soul, and all her power of looks,
 Of tears, of sighs, of softness, plays upon us ;
 He's more or less than man who can resist her.
 For me, my steadfast soul approves, nay more,
 Exults in the protection it has promis'd.
 And nought, tho' plighted honour did not bind me,
 Should shake the virtuous purpose of my heart ;
 Nought, by th' avenging gods ! who heard my vow,
 And hear me now again.

1

NARVA.

NARVA.

And was it then
For this you conquer'd?

MASINISSA.

Yes, and triumph in it.

This was my fondest wish ; the very point,
The plume of glory, the delicious prize
Of bleeding years. I must have been a brute,
A greater monster than *Numidia* breeds,
A horror to my self ; if on the ground,
Cast vilely from me, I th' illustrious fair
Had left to bondage, bitterness, and death.
Nor is there ought in war worth what I feel ;
In pomp and hollow state, like the sweet sense
Of infelt blefs ; which the reflection gives me,
Of saving thus such excellence and beauty
From what her generous soul abhors the most.

NARVA.

My friend ! my royal lord ! alas ! you slide,
You sink from virtue. On the giddy brink
Of fate you stand.—One step, and all is lost !

MASINISSA.

No more, no more ! if this is being lost,
And rushing down the precipice of fate ;
Then down I go, far far beyond the reach
Of scrupulous dull precaution.—Leave me, *Narva*.
I want to be alone, to find some shade,
Some solitary gloom ; there to shake off
These harsh tumultuous cares that vex my life,

This

This sick ambition on it self recoiling ;
 And there to listen to the gentle voice,
 The sigh of peace, something, I know not what,
 That whispers transport to my heart.—Farewel.

S C E N E IV.

NARVA *alone.*

Struck, and he knows it not. — So when the field,
 Elate in heart, the warrior scorns to yield ;
 The streaming blood can scarce convince his eyes ;
 Nor will he feel the wound by which he dies.

The End of the Second Act.

A C T

A C T III. S C E N E I.

MASINISSA *alone.*

IN vain I wander thro' the shade for Peace ;
'Tis with the calm alone, the pure of heart,
That there the goddess talks — But in my breast
Some busy thought, some secret eating pang,
Still restless throbs, on *Sophonisba* still
Earnest, intent, devoted all to her.
What may this mean? — 'Tis love, almighty love!
Returning on me with a stronger tide.
Come to my breast, thou rosy-smiling god!
Come unconfin'd! bring all thy joys along,
All thy soft cares, and mix them copious here.
Quick, let me fly to her; and there forget
This tedious absence, war, ambition, noise,
Friendship it self, the vanity of fame,
And all but love, for love is more than all!

S C E N E

SCENE II.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

MASINISSA.

Welcome again, my friend,—Come nearer, *Narva*;
 Lend me thine arm, and I will tell thee all,
 Unfold my secret heart, whose every pulse
 With *Sophonisba* beats.—Nay hear me out—
 Swift, as I mus'd, the conflagration spread;
 At once too strong, too general, to be quench'd.
 I love, and I approve it, doat upon her,
 Even think these minutes lost I talk with thee.
 Heavens! what emotions have possess'd my soul!
 Snatch'd by a moment into years of passion.

NARVA.

Ah *Masinissa*! —

MASINISSA.

Argue not against me.

Talk down the circling winds that lift the desert;
 And when by lightning fir'd the forests blaze,
 Talk down the flame, but not my stronger love.
 I have for love a thousand thousand reasons,
 Dear to the heart, and potent o'er the soul.
 My every thought, reflexion, mem'ry, all
 Are a perpetual spring of tenderness;
 Oh *Sophonisba*! I am wholly thine.

NARVA.

NARVA.

Is this deceitful day then come to nought,
 This day, that set thee on a double throne?
 That gave thee *Syphax* chain'd, thy deadly foe?
 With perfect conquest crown'd thee, perfect glory?
 Is it so soon eclips'd? and does yon sun,
 Yon setting sun, who this fair morning saw thee
 Ride through the ranks of long extended war,
 As radiant as himself; and when the storm
 Began, beheld thee tread the rising furge
 Of battle high, and drive it on the foe;
 Does he now, blushing, see thee sunk so weak?
 Caught in a smile? the captive of a look?
 I cannot name it without tears.

MASINISSA.

Away!

I'm sick of war, of the destroying trade,
 Smooth'd o'er, and gilded with the name of glory.
 In vain you spread the martial field to me,
 My happier eyes are turn'd another way,
 Behold it not; or, if they do, behold it
 Shrunk up, far off, a visionary scene;
 As to the waking man appears the dream.

NARVA.

Or rather as realities appear,
 The virtue, pomp, and dignities of life,
 In sick disorder'd dreams.

MASINISSA.

Think not I scorn
 The task of heroes, when oppression rages,

And

And lawless violence confounds the world.
 Who would not bleed with transport for his country,
 Tear every tender passion from his heart,
 And greatly die to make a people happy;
 Ought not to taste of happiness himself,
 And is low-soul'd indeed — But sure, my friend,
 There is a time for love; or life were vile,
 A tedious circle of unjoyous days
 With senseless hurry fill'd, distasteful, wretched,
 Till love comes smiling in, and brings his sweets
 Its healing sweets, soft cares, transporting joys,
 That make the poor account of life compleat,
 And justify the Gods.

NARVA.

Mistaken Prince,

I blame not love. But —

MASINISSA.

Slander not my passion.

I've suffer'd thee too far. — Take heed, old man. —

Love will not bear an accusation, *Narva*.

NARVA.

I'll speak the truth, when truth and friendship call,
 Nor fear thy frown unkind. — Thou hast no right
 To *Sophonisba*; she belongs to *Rome*.

MASINISSA.

Ha! she belongs to *Rome*. — 'Tis true — My thoughts,
 Where have you wander'd, not to think of this?
 Think e'er I promis'd? e'er I lov'd? — Confusion!
 I know not what to say — I should have lov'd,

The'

Tho' *Jove* in muttering thunder had forbid it,
 But *Rome* will not refuse so small a boon,
 Whose gifts are kingdoms ; *Rome* must grant it sure,
 One captive to my wish, one poor request,
 So small to them, but oh so dear to me !
 In this my heart confides.

NARVA.

Delusive love !

Thro' what wild projects is the frantick mind
 Beguil'd by thee ?—And think'st thou that the *Romans*,
 The senators of *Rome*, these gods on earth,
 Wise, steady to the right, severely just,
 All uncorrupt, and like eternal fate
 Not to be mov'd, will listen to the sigh
 Of idle love ? They who when virtue calls,
 Will not the voice itself of nature hear,
 But bid their children bleed before their eyes ;
 Will they regard the light fantastick pangs
 Of a fond heart ? and with thy kingdom give thee
 Their most inveterate foe, from their firm side,
 Like *Syphax*, to delude thee ? and the point
 Of their own bounty on themselves to turn ?
 Thou canst not hope it sure.—Impossible !

MASINISSA.

What shall I do ? be now the friend exerted.
 For love and honour press me ; love and honour,
 All that is dear and excellent in life,
 All that or soothes the man or lifts the heroe,
 Engage my soul.

NARVA.

Rash was your vow, my lord.
I know not what to counsel.—When you vow'd,
You vow'd what was not in your power to grant;
And therefore 'tis not binding.

MASINISSA.

Never! Never!

Oh never will I falsify that vow!
Ere then destruction seize me! Yes, ye *Romans*,
If it be so, there, take your kingdoms back,
Your friendship, your esteem, all, all but her.

Hold,—Let me think a while — It shall be so!
By all th' inspiring gods that prompt my thought,
This very night shall solemnize our vows;
And the next joyous fun, that visits *Afric*,
See *Sophonisba* seated on my throne.—
Then must they spare my queen.—They will not, surely,
They will not dare to force my consort from me.

NARVA.

And is it possible, ye gods that rule us!
Can *Masinissa* in his pride of youth,
In his meridian glory shining wide,
The light of *Afric*, can the friend of *Scipio*
Take a false woman to his nuptial bed,
Who scorn'd him for a tyrant old and cruel,
His rancorous foe? and gave her untouch'd bloom,
Her spring of charms to *Syphax*?

MASINISSA.

Curst remembrance!

This,

This, this, has thrown a serpent to my heart ;
 While it o'erflow'd with tendernefs, with joy,
 With all the sweetnesss of exulting love.
 Now nought but gall is there, and burning poison.
 Yes, it was so !—Curse on her vain ambition !
 What had her meddling sex to do with states ?
 Forfook for him, just gods ! for hateful *Syphax*,
 My tender, faithful love for his gross passion !
 The thought is hell !—Oh I had treasur'd up
 A world of indignation, years of scorn ;
 But her sad suppliant witchcraft sooth'd it down.
 Where is she now, that it may burst upon her ?
 Haste, bring her to me ; tho' my plighted faith
 Shall save her from the *Romans*, yet I'll tell her,
 That I will never, never see her more !
 Ha ! there she comes.—Pernicious fair one !—Leave me,

S C E N E III.

SOPHONISBA, MASINISSA.

SOPHONISBA.

Forgive this quick return.—The rage, confusion,
 And mingled passions of this luckless day,
 Made me forget another warm request
 I had to beg of generous *Masinissa* ;
 For oh to whom, save to the generous, can
 The miserable fly ?—But much disturb'd

You

You look, and scowl upon me a denial.
 Repentance frowns on your contracted brow.
 Already, weary of my sinking fate,
 You seem to droop; and for unhappy *Syphax*
 I shall implore in vain.

MASINISSA.

For *Syphax*? vengeance!
 And canst thou mention him? Oh grant me breath!

SOPHONISBA.

I know, young prince, how deep he has provok'd thee;
 How keen he fought thy youth; thro' what a fire
 Of great distress, from which you come the brighter.

On meer indifferent objects, common bounty
 Will shower relief; but when our bitterest foe
 Lies sunk, disarm'd, and desolate, then! then!
 To feel the mercies of a pitying God,
 To raise him from the dust, and that best way
 To triumph o'er him, is heroic goodness.
 Oh let unhappy *Syphax* touch thy heart,
 Victorious *Masinissa*!

MASINISSA.

Monstrous this!

Still dost thou blast me with that cursed name!
 The very name thy conscious guilt should shun.

Had he but driven me from my native throne,
 From regal pomp and luxury, to dwell
 Among the forest beast; to bear the beam
 Of red *Numidian* suns, and the dank dew
 Of cold unshelter'd nights; to mix with wolves,

To

To hunt with hungry tigers for my prey,
 And thirst with *Dipsads* on the burning sand;
 I could have thank'd him for his angry lesson;
 The fair occasion that his rage afforded
 Of learning patience, fortitude, and hope,
 Still rising stronger on incumbent fate.
 But there is one unpardonable outrage,
 That scorches up the tear in pity's eye,
 And even sweet mercy's self converts to gall.
 I cannot — will not name it — Down my heart,
 My swelling heart!

SOPHONISBA.

Ah! whence this sudden storm,
 That hurries all thy soul?

MASINISSA.

And dost thou ask?
 Ask thy own faithless heart, snatch'd from my vows,
 From the warm wishes of my springing youth,
 And given to that old hated monster, *Syphax*.
 Perfidious *Sophonisba*!

SOPHONISBA.

Nay no more.
 With too much truth I can return thy charge.
 Why didst thou drive me to that cruel choice?
 Why leave me, with my country, to destruction?
 Why break thy love, thy faith, and join the *Romans*?

MASINISSA.

By heavens! the *Romans* were my better genius,
 Sav'd me from shame, and form'd my youth to glory;

But for the *Romans* I had been a savage,
A wretch like *Syphax*, a forgotten thing,
The tool of *Carthage*.

SOPHONISBA.

Meddle not with *Carthage*,
Impatient youth ; for that I will not bear ;
Tho' I am here thy slave, I will not bear it.
Not one base word of *Carthage* — on thy soul !

MASINISSA.

How vain thy phrenzy ! Go, command thy slaves,
Thy fools, thy *Syphaxes* ; but I will speak,
Speak loud of *Carthage*, call it false, ungenerous ;
The *Romans* are the light, the glory —

SOPHONISBA.

Romans !

Perdition on the *Romans* ! — on their friends,
On all but thee. — The *Romans* are the scourge
Of the vext world, destroyers of mankind,
And all beneath the smooth dissembling mask
Of justice, and compassion ; as if slave
Was but another name for civiliz'd.

Against her tyrant power, each generous sword
Of every nation should be drawn — While *Carthage*
Unblemish'd rises on the base of commerce,
Founds her fair empire on that common good,
And asks of heaven nought but the winds and tides
To carry plenty, letters, science, wealth,
Civility, and grandeur, round the world.

MASINISSA.

MASINISSA.

No more compare them ! for the gods themselves
Declare for *Rome*.

SOPHONISBA.

It was not always so.
The gods declar'd for *Hannibal* ; when *Italy*
Blaz'd all around him, all her streams ran blood ;
And when at *Trebia*, *Thrasymene*, and *Cannæ*,
The *Carthaginian* sword with *Roman* blood
Was drunk—Oh, that he then, on that dread day,
While lifeless, consternation blacken'd *Rome*,
Had raz'd th' accursed city to the ground,
And sav'd the world ! —When will it come again,
A day so glorious, and so big with vengeance
On those my foul abhorrs ?

MASINISSA.

Avert it heaven !
The *Romans* not enslave, but save the world
From *Carthaginian* rage —

SOPHONISBA.

I'll bear no more !
Nor tenderness, nor life, nor liberty,
Nothing shall make me bear it.—Rather, rather,
Detested as ye are, ye *Romans*, take me—
Oh, pitying take me to your nobler chains,
And save me from this abject youth, your slave !
—How canst thou kill me thus ?—

MASINISSA.

I meant it not.

I only meant to tell thee, haughty fair one !
 How this alone might bind me to the *Romans* ;
 That, in a frail and sliding hour, they snatch'd me
 From the perdition of thy love, which fell,
 Like baleful lightning, where I most could wish,
 And prov'd destruction to my mortal foe.
 Oh pleasing ! fortunate !

SOPHONISBA.

I thank them too.

By heavens ! for once, I love them ; since they turn'd
 My better thoughts from thee. Thou — But I will not
 Give thee the name thy mean fervility
 From my just scorn deserves.

MASINISSA.

Oh freely call me

By every name thy fury can inspire ;
 Delight me with thy hate.—I love no more —
 It will not hurt me, *Sophonisba*.—Love,
 Long since I gave it to the passing winds,
 And would not be a lover for the world.
 A lover is the very fool of nature,
 Made sick by his own wantonness of thought,
 His fever'd fancy : while, to your own charms
 Imputing all, you swell with boundless pride.
 Shame on the wretch ! he should be driven from men,
 To live with *Asian* slaves, in one soft herd,
 All worthless, all ridiculous together.

For me ; this moment, here I mean to bid
 Farewel, a glad farewel to love and thee.

SOPHO-

SOPHONISBA.

With all my soul, farewell! — Yet ere you go;
 Know that my spirit burns as high as thine,
 As high to glory, and as low to love.

Thy promises are void; and I absolve thee,
 Here in the presence of the listening gods.—
 Take thy repented vows — To proud *Cornelia*
 I'd rather be a slave, to *Scipio's* mother,
 Than queen of all *Numidia*, by the favour
 Of him, who dares insult the helpless thus.

(Pausing)

Still dost thou stay? behold me then again,
 Hopeless, and wild, a lost abandon'd slave.
 And now thy brutal purpose must be gain'd.
 Away, thou cruel, and ungenerous, go!

MASINISSA.

No, not for worlds would I resume my vow!
 Dishonour blast me then! all kind of ills
 Fill up my cup of bitterness, and shame!
 When I resign thee to triumphant *Rome*.

Oh lean not thus dejected to the ground!
 The fight is misery.—what roots me here?

(Aside.)

Alas! I have urg'd my foolish heart too far;
 And love depress'd recoils with greater force.
 Oh *Sophonisba*!

SOPHONISBA.

By thy pride she dies.
 Inhuman prince!

D 3

MASINISSA.

MASINISSA.

Thine is the triumph, Love !
By heaven and earth ! I cannot hold it more.
Wretch that I was, to crush th' unhappy thus ;
The fairest too, the dearest of her sex !
For whom my soul could die !—Turn, quickly turn,
O *Sophonisba* ! my belov'd ! my glory !
Turn and forgive the violence of love,
Of love that knows no bounds !

SOPHONISBA.

And can it be ?
Can that soft passion prove so fierce of heart,
As on the tears of misery, the sighs
Of death, to feast ? to torture what it loves ?

MASINISSA.

Yes it can be, thou goddess of my soul !
Whose each emotion is but varied love,
All over love, its powers, its passions, all :
Its anger, indignation, fury, love ;
Its pride, disdain, even detestation, love ;
And when it, wild, resolves to love no more,
Then is the triumph of excessive love.

Didst thou not mark me ? mark the dubious rage,
That tore my heart with anguish while I talk'd ?
Thou didst ; and must forgive so kind a fault.
What would thy trembling lips ?

SOPHONISBA.

Oh let me die.
For storm, so much contempt
Thrown

Thrown out on *Carthage*, so much praise on *Rome*,
 Were worse than death. Why should I longer tire
 My weary fate? The most relentless *Roman*
 What could he more?

MASINISSA.

Oh *Sophonisba*, hear!
 See me thy suppliant now. Talk not of death.
 I have no life but thee.—Alas! Alas!
 Hadst thou a little tenderness for me,
 The smallest part of what I feel, thou wouldst —
 What wouldst thou not forgive? But how indeed,
 How can I hope it? Yet I from this moment
 Will so devote my being to thy pleasure,
 So live alone to gain thee; that thou must,
 If there is human nature in thy breast,
 Feel some relenting warmth,

SOPHONISBA.

Well, well, 'tis past.
 To be inexorable suits not slaves.

MASINISSA.

Spare, spare that word; it stabs me to the soul;
 My crown, my life, and liberty are thine.

Oh give my passion way! My heart is full,
 Opprest by love; and I could number tears,
 With all the dews that sprinkle o'er the morn;
 Oh! thou hast melted down my stubborn soul
 To femal tenderness — Enough, enough,
 Have we been cheated by the trick of state,

D 4 For

For *Rome* and *Carthage* suffer'd much too long ;
 And led, by gaudy fancies, wander'd far,
 Far from our bliss. But now since met again,
 Since here I hold thee, circle all perfection,
 In these blest arms ; since fate too presses hard,
 Since *Rome* and slavery drive thee to the brink ;
 Let this immediate night exchange our vows,
 Secure my bliss, our future fortunes blend,
 Set thee, the queen of beauty, on my throne,
 And on these lovely brows for empire form'd
 Place *Afric's* noblest crown.—A wretched gift
 To what my love would give !

SOPHONISBA.

What ? marry thee ?

This night ?

MASINISSA.

Thou dear one ! yes, this very night
 Let injur'd *Hymen* have his rights restor'd,
 And bind our broken vows.—Think, serious, think !
 On what I plead.—A thousand reasons urge.—
 Captivity dissolves thy former marriage ;
 And if the meanest vulgar thus are freed,
 Can *Sophonisba* to a slave, to *Syphax*,
 The most exalted of her sex, be bound ?
 Besides it is the best, perhaps sole way,
 To save thee from the *Romans* ; and must sure
 Bar their pretensions : or if ruin comes,
 To perish with thee is to perish happy.

SOPHO.

SOPHONISBA.

Yet must I still insist. —

MASINISSA.

It shall be so.

I know thy purpose ; it would plead for *Syphax*.
 He shall have all, thou dearest ! shall have all,
 Crowns, trifles, kingdoms, all again, but thee,
 But thee, thou more than all !

SOPHONISBA.

(Aside.)

Bear witness heaven ;

This is alone for *Carthage*.*(To him.)*

Gain'd by goodness

I may be thine. Expect no love, no fighting.

Perhaps, hereafter, I may learn again

To hold thee dear. If on these terms thou can'st,

Here take me, take me, to thy wishes.

MASINISSA.

Yes,

Yes, *Sophonisba* ! as a wretch takes life

From off the rack. — All wild with frantic joy,

Thus hold thee, press thee, to my bounding heart ;

And bless the bounteous Gods. — Can heaven give more ?

Oh happy ! happy ! happy ! — Come, my fair,

This ready minute sees thy will perform'd ;

From *Syphax* knocks his chains ; and I myself,Even in his favour, will request the *Romans*.

Oh, thou hast smil'd my passions into peace !
 So, while conflicting winds embroil'd the Seas,
 In perfect bloom, warm with immortal blood,
 Young *Venus* rear'd her o'er the raging flood ;
 She smil'd around, like thine her beauties glow'd ;
 When smooth, in gentle swells, the furies flow'd ;
 Sunk, by degrees, into a liquid plain ;
 And one bright calm sat trembling on the main.

The End of the Third Act.

ACT

ACT IV. SCENE I.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

PHOENISSA.

HAIL queen of *Masæsyia* once again
 And fair *Massyia* join'd ! This rising day
 Saw *Sophonisba*, from the height of life,
 Thrown to the very brink of slavery ;
 State, honours, armies vanish'd ; nothing left
 But her own great unconquerable mind.
 And yet, ere evening comes, to larger power
 Restor'd I see my royal friend, and kneel
 In grateful homage to the Gods, and her.

Ye Powers, what awful changes often mark
 The fortunes of the great !

SOPHONISBA.

Phœnissa, true ;

'Tis awful all, the wonderous work of fate.
 But, ah, this sudden marriage damps my soul !
 I like it not, that wild precipitance
 Of youth, that ardor, that impetuous stream
 In which his love return'd. At first, my friend,

He vainly rag'd with disappointed love ;
 And, as the hasty storm subfided, then
 To softness varied, to returning fondness,
 To sighs, to tears, to supplicating vows ;
 But all his vows were idle, till at last
 He shook my heart by *Rome*.—To be his queen
 Could only save me from their horrid power.
 And there is madness in that thought, enough
 In that strong thought alone to make me run
 From nature.

PHOENISSA.

Was it not auspicious, madam ?
 Just as we hop'd ? just as our wishes plan'd ?
 Nor let your spirit sink. Your serious hours,
 When you behold the *Roman* ravage check'd,
 From their enchantment *Masinissa* freed,
 And *Carthage* mistress of the world again,
 This marriage will approve : then will it rise
 In all its glory, virtuous, wise and great,
 While happy nations, then deliver'd, join
 Their loud acclaim. And, had the blest occasion
 Neglected flown, where now had been your hopes ?
 Your liberty ? your country ? where your all ?
 Think well of this ; you cannot but exult
 In what is done.

SOPHONISBA.

So may my hopes succeed,
 As love alone to *Carthage*, to the public,
 Led me a marriage-victim to the temple,

And

And justifies my vows!—Ha! *Syphax* here!
 What would his rage with me? — *Phœnissa*, stay.
 But this one tryal more — Heroic truth,
 Support me now!

SCENE II.

SYPHAX, SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

SYPHAX.

You seem to fly me, madam,
 To shun my gratulations.—Here I come,
 To join the general joy; and I, sure I,
 Who have to dotage, have to ruin lov'd you,
 Must take a tender part in your success,
 In your recover'd state.

SOPHONISBA.

'Tis very well.

I thank you, sir.

SYPHAX.

And gentle *Masiniſſa*,
 Say, will he prove a very coming fool?
 All pliant, all devoted to your will?
 A duteous wretch like *Syphax*?—Ha! not mov'd!
 Speak thou perfidious! canst thou bear it thus?
 With such a steady countenance? canst thou
 Here see the man thou hast so grossly wrong'd,
 And yet not sink in shame? And yet not shake

In

In every guilty nerve?

SOPHONISBA.

What have I done,
That I should tremble? that I should not dare
To bear thy presence? Was my heart to blame,
I'd tremble at myself, and not at thee,
Proud man! Nor would I live to be ashamed.
For of all evils, to the generous, shame
Is the most deadly pang.—But you behold
My late engagement with a jealous, false,
And selfish eye.

SYPHAX.

Avenge *Juno*, hear!
And canst thou think to justify thy self?
I blush to hear thee, traitress!

SOPHONISBA.

O my soul!

Canst thou hear this, this base opprobrious language,
And yet be tamely calm?—Well, for this once
It shall be so—in pity to thy madness—
Impatient spirit down!—Yes, *Syphax*, yes,
Yes I will greatly justify myself;
Even by the consort of the thundering *Jove*,
Who binds the holy marriage-vow, be judg'd.
And every generous heart, not meanly lost
In little low pursuits, will sure absolve me.
But in the tempest of the soul, when rage,
Loud indignation, unattentive pride,
And jealousy confound it, how can then

The nobler, *public* sentiments be heard !
Yet let me tell thee —

SYPHAX.

Thou canst tell me nought.
Away ! away ! nought but illusion, falsehood —

SOPHONISBA.

My heart will burst, in justice to my self
If here I speak not ; tho' thy rage, I know,
Can never be convinc'd, yet shall it be
Confounded.—What ! must I renounce my freedom ?
Forgo the power of doing general good ?
Yield myself up the slave, the barbarous triumph
Of insolent, enrag'd, inveterate *Rome* ?
And all for nothing but to grace thy fall ?
Nay, singly perish to retain the name,
The empty title of a captive's wife ?

For thee ; the *Romans* may be mild to thee ;
But I, a *Carthaginian*, I, whose blood
Holds unrelenting enmity to theirs ;
Who have myself much hurt them, and who live
Only to work them woe ; what, what can I
Hope from their vengeance, but the very dregs
Of the worst fate, the bitterness of bondage ?
Yet thou, kind man, thou in thy generous love,
Wouldst have me suffer that ; be bound to thee,
For that dire end alone, beyond the stretch
Of nature, and of law.

SYPHAX.

Confusion ! Law !
I know

I know the laws permit thee, the gross laws
 That rule the vulgar. I'm a captive, true;
 And therefore may'st thou plead a shameful right
 To leave me to my chains—But say, thou base one!
 Ungrateful! say, for whom am I a captive?
 For whom has battle after battle bled?
 For whom my crown, my kingdom, and my all,
 Been vilely cast away? For one, ye gods!
 Who leaves me for the victor, for the foe
 I hold in utter endless detestation.
 Fire! fury! hell!—Oh I am richly paid!—
 But This it is to love a Woman — Woman!
 The source of all disaster, all perdition!
 Man in himself is social, would be happy,
 Too happy; but the gods, to keep him wretched,
 Curs'd him with woman! fond, enchanting, smooth,
 And harmless-seeming woman; but at heart
 All poison, serpents, tigers, furies, all
 That is destructive, in one breast combin'd,
 And gilded o'er with beauty!

SOPHONISBA.

Hapless man!

I pity thee; this madness only stirs
 My bosom to compassion, not to rage.
 Think as you list of our unhappy sex,
 Too much subjected to your tyrant force;
 Yet know that all, we were not all at least,
 Form'd for your trifles, for your wanton hours.
 Our passions too can sometimes soar above

The household task assign'd us, can extend
 Beyond the narrow sphere of families,
 And take great states into th'expanded heart,
 As well as yours, ye partial to yourselves!
 And this is my support, my joy, my glory;
 On these great principles, and these alone,
 I still direct my conduct.

SYPHAX.

False as hell!

I loath your sex! when it pretends to virtue.
 You talk of honour, conscience, patriotism!
 A female patriot!—Vanity!—Absurd!
 Even doating dull credulity would laugh
 To hear you prate. Did ever woman yet
 Form any better purpose in her thought,
 Than how to please her pride or wanton will?
 Those are the principles on which you act,
 Yes, those alone.

SOPHONISBA.

Must I then, must I, *Syphax*,
 Give thee a bitter proof of what I say?
 I would not seem to heighten thy distress,
 Not in the least insult thee. Thou art fallen,
 So fate severe has will'd it, fallen by me;
 I therefore have been patient: from another
 Such language, such indignity, had fir'd
 My soul to madness. But since driven so far,
 I must remind thy blind injurious rage
 Of our unhappy marriage.—

SYPHAX.

SYPHAX.

Dar'st thou name it,
After such perfidy?

SOPHONISBA.

Allow me, *Syphax*,
Hear me but once! If what I here declare
Shines not with reason, and the clearest truth;
May I be base, despis'd, and dumb for ever!

I pray thee think, when unpropitious *Hymen*
Our hands united, how I stood engag'd.
Was I not blooming in the pride of youth,
And youthful hopes; sunk in a passion too,
Which few resign? Yet then I married thee,
Because to *Carthage* deem'd a stronger friend;
For that alone. On these conditions, say,
Didst thou not take me, court me to thy throne?
Have I deceiv'd thee since? Have I dissembled?
To gain one purpose, e'er pretended what
I never felt? Thou canst not say I have.

And if that principle, which then inspir'd
My marrying thee, was right, it cannot now
Be wrong; Nay, since my native city wants
Assistance more, and sinking calls for aid,
'Tis still more right —

SYPHAX.

This reasoning is insult!

SOPHONISBA.

I'm sorry that thou dost oblige me to it.
Then in a word take my full-open'd soul.

All

All love, but that of *Carthage*, I despise.
 I formerly to *Masinissa* thee
 Preferr'd not, nor to thee now *Masinissa*,
 But *Carthage* to you both. And if preferring
 'Thousands to one, a whole collected people,
 All nature's tenderness, whate'er is sacred,
 The liberty, the welfare of a state,
 To one man's frantic happiness, be shame;
 Here, *Syphax*, I invoke it on my head!

This set aside; I, careless of myself,
 And, scorning prosperous state, had still been thine,
 In all the depth of misery proudly thine!
 But since the publick good, the law supreme,
 Forbids it; I will leave thee with a kingdom,
 The same I found thee, or not reign myself.

Alas! I see thee hurt—Why cam'st thou here,
 Thus to inflame thee more?

SYPHAX.

Why forcere'st? why?

Thou complication of all deadly mischief!
 Thou lying, soothing, specious, charming fury!
 I'll tell the why—To breathe my great revenge;
 To throw this load of burning madness from me;
 To stab thee!—

SOPHONISBA.

Ha!—

SYPHAX.

—And, springing from thy heart

To

To quench me with thy blood !

(*Phænissa interposes.*)

SOPHONISBA.

Off, give me way !

Phænissa ; tempt not thou his brutal rage.

Me, me, he dares not murder : if he dares,

Here let his fury strike ; for I dare die.

What holds thy trembling hand ?

PHOENISSA.

Guards !

SOPHONISBA.

Seize the king.

But look you treat him well, with all the state

His dignity demands.

SYPHAX.

That care from thee

Is worse than death,—The *Roman* trumpets !—Ha !

Now I bethink me, *Rome* will do me justice.

Yes, I shall see thee walk the slave of *Rome*,

Forget my wrongs, and glut me with the fight.

Be that my best revenge.

SOPHONISBA.

Inhuman ! that,

If there is death in *Afric*, shall not be.

SCENE

S C E N E III.

LÆLIUS, SYPHAX.

LÆLIUS.

Syphax ! alas, how fallen ! how chang'd ! from what
I here beheld thee once in pomp, and splendor,
At that illustrious interview, when *Rome*
And *Carthage* met beneath this very roof,
Their two great generals, *Asdrubal* and *Scipio*,
To court thy friendship. Of the same repast
Both gracefully partook, and both reclin'd
On the same couch : for personal distaste
And hatred seldom burn between the brave.
Then the superiour virtues of the *Roman*
Gain'd all thy heart. Even *Asdrubal* himself,
With admiration struck and just despair,
Own'd him as powerful at the social feast
As in the battle. This thou may'st remember,
And how thy faith was given before the Gods,
And sworn and seal'd to *Scipio* ; yet how false
Thou since has prov'd, I need not now recount :
But let thy sufferings for thy guilt atone,
The captive for the king. A *Roman* tongue
Scorns to pursue the triumph of the sword,
With mean upbraidings.

SYPHAX.

SYPHAX.

Lælius, 'tis too true.

Curse on the cause!

LÆLIUS.

But where is *Masiniſſa*?

The brave young victor, the *Numidian Roman*!

Where is he? that my joy, my glad applauſe,

From envy pure, may hail his happy ſtate.

Why that contemptuous ſmile?

SYPHAX.

Too credulous *Roman*!

I ſmile to think how this brave *Masiniſſa*,

This *Rome*-devoted heroe, muſt ſtill more

Attract thy praiſes, by a late exploit,

In every thing ſucceſſful.

LÆLIUS.

What is this?

Theſe publick ſhouts? A ſtrange unuſual joy

O'er all the captive city blazes wide.

What wanton riot reigns to night in *Cirtha*?

Within theſe conquer'd walls?

SYPHAX.

This, *Lælius*, is

A night of triumph o'er my conqueror,

O'er *Masiniſſa*.

LÆLIUS.

Masiniſſa! How?

SYPHAX.

Why he to night is married to my queen.

LÆLIUS.

LÆLIUS.

Impossible! —

SYPHAX.

Yes, she, the fury! she,

Who put the nuptial torch into my hand,
 That set my throne, my palace, and my kingdom,
 All in a blaze; she now has seiz'd on him,
 Will turn him soon from *Rome* — I know her power,
 Her lips distil unconquerable poison.
 O glorious thought! — her arts, her fatal love
 Will crush him deep, beneath the mighty ruins
 Of falling *Carthage*.

LÆLIUS.

Can it be? Amazement!

SYPHAX.

Nay learn it from himself. — He comes — Away!
 Ye furies snatch me from his sight! For hell,
 Its tortures all are gentle to the presence
 Of a triumphat rival?

LÆLIUS.

What is man?

SCENE IV.

MASINISSA, LÆLIUS.

MASINISSA.

Thou more than partner of this glorious day,
 Which has from *Carthage* torn her chief support,

To

And tottering left her, I rejoice to see thee —
 To *Cirthe* welcome, *Lælius*.—Thy brave legions
 Now taste the sweet repose by valour purchas'd ;
 This city pours refreshment on their toils.
 I order'd *Narva* —

LÆLIUS.

Thanks to *Masiniſſa*.

All that is well.—But I observ'd the king
 More loofely guarded than befits the ſtate
 Of ſuch a captive. True, indeed, from him
 There is not much to fear. The dangerous ſpirit
 Is his imperious queen, his *Sophoniſſa*.
 The pride, the rage of *Carthage* live in her.
 How ? where is ſhe ?

MASINIſſA.

She, *Lælius* ? in my care.

Think not of her. I'll answer for her conduct.

LÆLIUS.

Yes, if in chains. Till then, believe me, prince,
 It were as ſafe to answer for the winds,
 That their loos'd fury will not rouse the waves,
 Or that the darted lightning will be harmleſs ;
 As promiſe peace from her.—But why ſo dark ?
 You ſhift your place, your countenance grows warm.
 It is not uſual this in *Masiniſſa*.
 Pray what offence can aſking for the queen,
 The *Roman* captive, give ?

MASINIſſA.

Lælius, no more.

You

You know my marriage.—*Syphax* has been busy —
It is unkind to dally with my passion.

LÆLIUS.

Ah, *Masiniſſa*! was it then for this,
Thy hurry hither from the recent battle?
Is the first instance of the *Roman* bounty
Thus, thus abus'd? They give thee back thy kingdom;
And in return are of their captive robb'd;
Of all they valued, *Sophonisba*.—

MASINISSA.

Robb'd!

How, *Lælius*? Robb'd!

LÆLIUS.

Yes, *Masiniſſa*, robb'd.

What is it else? But I, this very night,
Will here assert the majesty of *Rome*,
And, mark me, tear her from the nuptial bed.

MASINISSA.

Oh Gods! oh patience! As soon, fiery *Roman*!
As soon thy rage might from her azure sphere
Tear yonder moon — The man who seizes her,
Shall set his foot first on my bleeding heart.
Of that be sure.—And is it thus you treat
Your firm allies? Thus kings in friendship with you?
Of human passions strip them?—Slaves indeed!
If thus deny'd the common privilege
Of nature, what the weakest creatures claim,
A right to what they love.

VOL. III.

E

LÆLIUS.

LÆLIUS.

Out! out!—For shame!

This passion makes thee blind. Here is a war,
 Which desolates the nations, has almost
 Laid waste the world. How many widows, orphans,
 And tender virgins weep its rage in *Rome*!
 Even her great senate droops; her nobles fail;
 Nature herself, by frequent prodigies,
 Seems at this havock of her works to sicken:
 And our *Ausonian* plains are now become
 A horror to the sight: At each sad step,
 Remembrance weeps. Yet her, the greatest prize
 It hitherto has yielded; her, whose charms
 Are only turn'd to whet its cruel point;
 Thou to thy wedded breast has wildly taken,
 Hast purchas'd thee her beauties by the blood
 Of thy protecting friends; and on a throne
 Set her, this day recover'd by their arms.
 Canst thou do this, and call thy self a king
 Ally'd to *Rome*: Rash youth, the *Roman* people,
 To kings, who dare offend them thus, vouchsafe not
 The honour of their friendship.—Thou hast thrown
 That glory from thee, and must now be taught
 To dread their wrath.

MASINISSA.

Be not so haughty, *Lælius*.

It scarce becomes the gentle *Scipio*'s friend;
 Suits not thy character, the tender manners
 I still have mark'd in thee. I honour *Rome*;

But

But honour too myself, my vows, my queen :
Nor will, nor can I tamely hear thee threaten
To seize her like a slave.

LÆLIUS.

I will be calm.

This thy rash deed, this unexpected shock,
Such a peculiar injury to me,
Thy friend and fellow-foldier, has perhaps
Snatch'd me too far. For hast thou not dishonour'd,
By this last action, a successful war,
Our common charge, trusted to us by *Scipio*?

MASINISSA.

Our charge from *Scipio* was to conquer *Syphax*,
Not by a barbarous triumph to insult
His beauteous queen. Was *Sophonisba* made,
To follow weeping a proud victor's chariot,
She, the first mistress of my heart, who still
Reigns in my soul, and there will reign for ever.
At such a sight, the warrior's eye might wet
His burning cheek ; and all the *Roman* matrons,
Who lin'd the laurel'd way, ashamed, and sad,
Turn from a captive brighter than themselves.
But *Scipio* will be milder.

LÆLIUS.

I disdain

This thy surmise, and give it up to *Scipio*.
These passions are not comely.—Here to morrow
Comes the proconsul. Mean time, *Masinissa*,
Ah, harden not thy self in flattering hope!

Scipio is mild, but steady.—Ha ! the queen.
I think she hates a *Roman*.— and will leave thee.

SCENE V.

SOPHONISBA, MASINISSA.

SOPHONISBA.

Was not that *Roman Lælius*, as I enter'd,
Who parted gloomy hence ?

MASINISSA.

Madam, the same.

SOPHONISBA.

Unhappy *Afric* ! since these haughty *Romans*
Have in this lordly manner trod thy courts.

I read his fresh reproaches in thy face ;
The lesson'd pupil in thy fallen look,
In that forc'd smile, which sickens on thy cheek.

MASINISSA.

Oh say not so, thou rapture of my soul !
For while I fondly gaze upon thy charms,
I smile as joyous as the sun in *May* ;
Nor can my heart, by thee possess'd, retain
One painful thought.

SOPHONISBA.

Nay, tell me *Masinissa* ;
How feels their tyranny, when 'tis brought home ?
When, lawless grown, it touches what is dear ?

Pomp

Pomp for a while may dazle thoughtless man,
False glory blind him ; but there is a time,
When ev'n the slave in heart will spurn his chains,
Nor know submission more.—What said thy tyrant?

MASINISSA.

His disappointment for a moment only
Burst in vain passion, and —

SOPHONISBA.

You stood abash'd ;
You bore his threats, and tamely-silent heard him,
Heard the fierce *Roman* mark me for his triumph,
Oh meanness !

MASINISSA.

Banish that unkind suspicion.
The thought enflam'd my soul. I vow'd my life,
My last *Massylian* to the sword, ere he
Should touch thy freedom with the least dishonour.
But that from *Scipio* —

SOPHONISBA.

Scipio !

MASINISSA.

That from him —

SOPHONISBA.

I tell thee, *Masinissa*, if from him
You gain my freedom, from my self conceal it.
I shall disdain such freedom.

MASINISSA.

Sophonisba !

Thou all my heart holds precious ! doubt no more.

Nor *Rome*, nor *Scipio*, nor a world combin'd
 Shall tear thee from me ; till outstretch'd I lie,
 A nameless corpse !

SOPHONISBA.

If thy protection fails,
 Of this at least be sure, be very sure,
 To give me timely death.

MASINISSA.

Cease thus to talk,
 Of death, of *Romans*, of unkind ambition.
 My softer thoughts those rugged themes refuse,
 And turn alone to love.—All, all, but thee,
 All nature is a passing dream to me.
 Fix'd in my view, thou dost for ever shine,
 Thy form forth-beaming from the soul divine.
 A spirit thine, which mortals might adore ;
 Despising love, and thence creating more.
 Thou the high passions, I the tender prove,
 Thy heart was form'd for glory, mine for love.

The End of the Fourth Act.

A C T

 A. C T V. S C E N E I.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

MASINISSA.

HAil to the joyous day ! With purple clouds
 The whole horizon glows. The breezy *Spring*
 Stands loosely floating on the mountain-top,
 And deals her sweets around. The sun too seems,
 As conscious of my joy, with brighter beams
 To gild the happy world ; and all things smile
 Like *Sophonisba*. Love and friendship sure
 Have mark'd this day with all their choicest blessings ;
 Oh ! *Sophonisba's* mine ! and *Scipio* comes !

NARVA.

My lord, the trumpets speak his near approach.

MASINISSA.

I want his secret audience—Leave us, *Narva*.

S C E N E II.

SCIPIO, MASINISSA.

MASINISSA.

Scipio ! more welcome than my tongue can speak !
 Oh greatly, dearly welcome ?

E 4

SCIPIO.

SCIPIO.

Masiniſſa!

My heart beats back thy joy.—A happy friend,
Rais'd by his prudence, fortitude, and valour,
O'er all his foes ; and on his native throne,
Amidst his reſcu'd ſhouting ſubjects, ſet :
Say, can the gods in lavish bounty give
A fight more pleaſing ?

M A S I N I S S A.

My great friend ! and patron !
It was thy timely, thy reſtoring aid
That brought me from the fearful deſart-life,
To live again in ſtate, and purple ſplendor.
Thy friendship arm'd me with the ſtrength of *Rome*,
And now I wield the ſcepter of my fathers,
See my dear people from the tyrants ſcourge,
From *Syphax* freed ; I hear their glad applauſes ;
And, to compleat my happineſs, have gain'd
A friend worth all. O gratitude, eſteem,
And love like mine, with what divine delight
Ye fill the heart !

SCIPIO.

Heroic youth ! thy virtue
Has earn'd whate'er thy fortune can beſtow.
It was thy patience, *Masiniſſa*, patience,
A champion clad in ſteel, that in the waſte
Attended ſtill thy ſtep, and ſav'd my friend
For better days. What cannot patience do !
A great deſign is ſeldom ſnatch'd at once ;

'Tis

'Tis patience heaves it on. From savage nature,
'Tis patience that has built up human life,
The nurse of arts! and *Rome* exalts her head
An everlasting monument of patience.

MASINISSA.

If I have that, or any virtue, *Scipio*,
'Tis copy'd all from thee.

SCIPIO.

No *Masinissa*,

'Tis all unborrow'd, the spontaneous growth
Of nature in thy breast.—Friendship for once
Must, tho' thou blushest, wear a liberal tongue;
Must tell thee, noble youth, that long experience
In councils, battles, many a hard event,
Has found thee still so constant, so sincere,
So wise, so brave, so generous, so humane,
So well attemper'd, and so fitly turn'd
For what is either great or good in life,
As casts distinguish'd honour on thy country;
And cannot but endear thee to the *Romans*.
For me, I think my labours all repaid,
My wars in *Afric*. *Masinissa's* friendship
Rewards them all. Be that my dearest triumph,
'To have assisted thy forlorn estate,
And lent a happy hand in raising thee
To thy paternal throne, usurp'd by *Syphax*.
The greatest service could be done my country,
Distracted *Afric*, and mankind in general,
Was thus to aid thy worth. To put the power

Of sovereign rule into the good man's hand,
Is giving peace and happiness to millions.

But has my friend, since late we parted armies,
Since he with *Lælius* acted such a brave,

Auspicious part against the common foe ;

Has he been blameless quite ? has he consider'd,

How pleasure often on the youthful heart,

Beneath the rosy soft disguise of love,

(All sweetness, smiles, and seeming innocence)

Steals unperceiv'd, and lays the victor low ?

I would not, cannot, put thee to the pain —

— It pains me deeper — of the least reproach. —

Let thy too faithful memory supply

The rest.

(*Pausing*)

Thy silence, that dejected look,

That honest colour flushing o'er thy cheek,

Impart thy better soul.

MASINISSA.

Oh my good lord !

Oh *Scipio* ! Love has seiz'd me, tyrant love

Inthralls my soul. I am undone by love !

SCIPIO.

And art thou then to ruin reconcil'd ?

Tam'd to destruction ! wilt thou be undone ?

Resign the towering thought ? the vast design,

With future glories big ? the warrior's wreath ?

The praise of senates ? an applauding world ?

All for a sigh ? all for a soft embrace ?

For a gay transient fancy, *Masinissa* ?

For shame, my friend ! for honour's sake, for virtue's !
 Sit not with folded arms, despairing, weak,
 Like a sick virgin fighting to the gale,
 Till sure destruction comes — Alas, how chang'd
 From him, the man I lov'd !

MASINISSA.

How chang'd indeed !
 The time has been, when, fir'd from *Scipio's* tongue,
 My soul had mounted in a flame with his. —
 Where is ambition flown ? Hopeless attempt !
 Can love like mine be quell'd ? Can I forget
 What still possesses, charms my thoughts for ever ?
 Throw scornful from me what I hold most dear ?
 Not feel the force of excellence ? To joy
 Be dead ? And undelighted with delight ?
 Hold, let me think a moment — no ! no ! no !
 I am unequal to thy virtue, *Scipio* !

SCIPIO.

Fie, *Masinissa*, fie ! By heavens ! I blush
 At thy dejection, this degenerate language.
 What ! perish for a woman ! Ruin all,
 All the fair deeds which an admiring world
 Hopes from thy riper years ; only to sooth
 A stubborn fancy, a luxurious will ?

How must it, think you, sound in future story ?
 Young *Masinissa* was a virtuous prince,
 And *Afric* smil'd beneath his early ray ;
 But that a *Carthaginian* captive came,
 By whom untimely in the common fate

Of love he fell. The wife will scorn the page.
 And all thy praise be some fond maid exclaiming,
 Where are those lovers now? O rather, rather,
 Had I ne'er seen the vital light of heaven,
 Than like the vulgar live, and like them die!
 Ambition sickens at the very thought.——
 To puff, and bustle here from day to day,
 Lost in the passions of inglorious life,
 Joys which the careless brutes possess above us.
 And when some years, each duller than another,
 Are thus elaps'd, in nauseous pangs to die;
 And pass away, like those forgotten things,
 That soon become as they had never been.

MASINISSA.

And am I dead to this?

SCIPIO.

The gods, my friend,
 Who train up heroes in misfortune's school,
 Have shook thee with adversity, with each
 Illustrious evil, that can raise, expand,
 And fortify the mind. Thy rooted worth
 Has stood these wintry blasts, grown stronger by them.
 Shall then in prosperous times, while all is mild,
 All vernal, far; and glory blows around thee;
 Shall then the *dead Serene* of pleasure come,
 And lay thy faded honours in the dust?

MASINISSA.

O gentle *Scipio*! spare me, spare my weakness.

SCIPIO.

SCIPIO.

Remember *Hannibal* — A signal proof,
A fresh example of destructive pleasure.
He was the dread of nations, once of *Rome*!
When from *Bellona*'s bosom, nurs'd in camps,
And hard with toil, he down the rugged *Alps*,
Rush'd like a torrent over *Italy*;
Unconquer'd, till the loose delights of *Capua*
Sunk his victorious arm, his genius broke,
Perfum'd, and made a lover of the hero.
Lo! now he droops in *Bruttium*, fear'd no more,
Remember him; and yet resume thy spirit,
Ere it be quite dissolv'd.

MASINISSA.

Shall *Scipio* stoop,
Thus to regard, to teach me wisdom thus;
And yet a stupid anguish at my heart
Repel whate'er he says? — But why, my friend,
Why should we kill the best of passions, love?
It aids the hero, bids ambition rise
To nobler heights, inspires immortal deeds,
Even softens brutes, and adds a grace to virtue.

SCIPIO.

There is a holy tenderness indeed,
A virtuous, social, sympathetic love,
That binds, supports, and sweetens human life.
But is thy passion such? — List, *Masinissa*,
While I the hardest office of a friend
Discharge; and, with a necessary hand,

A hand, tho' harsh at present, truly tender,
I paint this passion. And if then thou still
Art bent to sooth it, I must fighting leave thee,
To what the gods think fit.

MASINISSA.

O never, *Scipio*!
O never leave me to myself! Speak on.
I dread, and yet desire thy friendly hand.

SCIPIO.

I hope that *Masinissa* needs not now
Be told, how much his happiness is mine ;
With what a warm benevolence I'd spring
To raise, confirm it, to prevent his wishes
In every right pursuit ! — But while he rages,
Burns in a fever, shall I let him quaff
Delicious poison for a cooling draught,
In foolish pity to his thirst ? shall I
Let a swift flame consume him as he sleeps,
Because his dreams are gay ? shall I indulge
A frenzy flash'd from an infectious eye ?
A sudden impulse unapprov'd by reason ?
Nay by thy cool deliberate thought condemn'd ?
Resolv'd against ? — A passion for a woman,
Who has abus'd thee basely ? left thy youth,
Thy love as sweet, as tender as the spring,
The blooming hero for the hoary tyrant ?
And now who makes thy sheltering arms alone
Her last retreat, to save her from the vengeance,
Which even her very perfidy to thee

Has

Has brought upon her head?—Nor is this all.—
 A woman who will ply her deepest arts,
 (Ah too prevailing, as appears already)
 Will never rest till *Syphax*' fate is thine ;
 Till friendship weeping flies, we join no more
 In glorious deeds, and thou fall off from *Rome* ?
 I could add too, that there is something cruel,
 Inhuman in thy passion. Does not *Syphax*,
 While thou rejoicest, die ? The generous heart
 Should scorn a pleasure which gives others pain.

If this my friend, all this consider'd deep,
 Alarm thee not, nor rouse thy resolution,
 And call the hero from his wanton slumber,
 Then *Masinissa*'s lost.

M A S I N I S S A.

Oh, I am pierc'd !
 In every thought am pierc'd ! 'Tis all too true.—
 I would, but can't deny it.—Whither, whither,
 Thro' what enchanted wilds have I been wandering ?
 They seem'd *Elysium*, the delightful plains,
 The happy groves of heroes and of lovers :
 But the divinity that breathes in thee
 Has broke the charm, and I am in a desert,
 Far from the land of peace. It was but lately
 That a pure joyous calm o'erspread my soul,
 And reason tun'd my passions into bliss ;
 When love came hurrying in, and with rash hand
 Mix'd them delirious, till they now ferment
 To misery.—There is no reasoning down

This

This deep, deep anguish ! this continual pang !
 A thousand things ! whene'er my raptur'd thought
 Runs back a little. — But I will not think. —
 And yet I must. — Oh Gods ! that I could lose
 What a few hours have on my memory grav'd
 In adamant.

SCIPIO.

But one strong effort more,
 And the fair field is thine — A conquest far
 Excelling that o'er *Syphax*. What remains,
 Since now thy madness to thy self appears,
 But an immediate manly resolution,
 To shake off this effeminate disease ;
 These soft ideas, which seduce thy soul,
 Make it all idle, weak, inglorious, wild,
 A scene of dreams ; to give them to the winds,
 And be my former friend, thy self again ?

I joy to find thee touch'd by generous motives,
 And that I need not bid thee recollect,
 Whose awful property thou hast usurp'd ;
 Need not assure thee, that the *Roman* people,
 The senators of *Rome*, will never suffer
 A dangerous woman, their devoted foe,
 A woman, whose irrefragable spirit
 Has in great part sustain'd this bloody war,
 Whose charms corrupted *Syphax* from their side,
 To ruin thee too, taint thy faithful breast,
 And kindle future war. No, fate itself
 Is not more steady to the right than they.

And,

And, where the publick good but seems concern'd,
 No motive their impenetrable hearts,
 Nor fear nor tenderneſs, can touch : ſuch is
 The ſpirit, that has rais'd Imperial Rome.

MASINISSA.

Ah killing truth !—But I have promis'd, *Scipio* !
 Have ſworn to ſave her from the *Roman* power.
 My plighted faith is paſs'd, my hand is given.
 And, by the conſcious gods ! who mark'd my vows,
 The whole united world ſhall never have her.
 For I will die a thouſand thouſand deaths,
 With all *Maſſylia* in one field expire ;
 Ere to the loweſt wretch, much leſs to her
 I love, to *Sophoniſſa*, to my queen,
 I violate my word.

SCIPIO.

My heart approves
 Thy reſolution, thy determin'd honour.
 For ever ſacred be thy word, and oath.
 But, thus divided, how to keep thy faith
 At once to *Rome* and *Sophoniſſa* ; how
 To ſave her from our chains, and yet thyſelf
 From greater bondage ; this thy ſecret thought
 Can beſt inform thee.

MASINISSA.

Agony ! Diſtraction !
 Theſe wilful tears !—O look not on me, *Scipio* !
 For I'm a child again.

SCIPIO.

SCIPIO.

Thy tears are no reproach.
 Tears oft look graceful on the manly cheek.
 The Cruel cannot weep. Lo ! Friendship's eye
 Gives thee the drop it would refuse itself.
 I know 'tis hard, wounds every bleeding nerve
 About thy heart, thus to tear off thy passion.
 But for that very reason, *Masiniſſa*,
 'Tis hop'd from thee. The harder, thence results
 The greater glory.—Why ſhould we pretend
 To conquer nations, and to rule mankind,
 Pre-eminent in glory, place, and power,
 While ſlaves at heart ? while by fantaſtic turns
 Our frantic paſſions reign ? This very thought
 Should turn our pomp to ſhame, diſgrace our triumphs
 And, when the ſhouts of millions rend our ears,
 Whiſper reproach.—O ye celeftial powers !
 What is it, in a torrent of ſucceſs,
 'To overflow the world ; if by the ſtream
 Our own enfeebled minds are borne away
 From reaſon and from virtue ? Real glory
 Springs from the ſilent conqueſt of ourſelves ;
 And without that the conqueror is nought
 But the firſt ſlave.—Then rouse thee, *Masiniſſa* !
 Nor in one weakneſs all thy virtues loſe ;
 And, oh, beware of long, of vain repentance !

M A S I N I S S A.

Well ! well ! no more.—It is but dying too !

S C E N E

SCENE III.

SCIPIO *alone.*

I wish I have not urg'd the truth to rigour !
 There is a time when virtue grows severe,
 Too much for nature, and even almost cruel.

SCENE IV.

SCIPIO, LÆLIUS.

SCIPIO.

Poor *Masissa*, *Lælius*, is undone ;
 Betwixt his passion and his reason tost
 In miserable conflict.

LÆLIUS.

Entering, *Scipio*,

He shot athwart me, nor vouchsaf'd one look.
 Hung on his clouded brow I mark'd despair,
 And his eye glaring with some dire resolve.
 Fast o'er his cheek too ran the hasty tear.
 It were great pity that he should be lost.

SCIPIO.

By heavens ! to lose him were a shock, as if
 I lost thee, *Lælius*, lost my dearest brother.
 Bound up in friendship from our infant years,
 A thousand lovely qualities endear him,

On

Only too warm of heart.

LÆLIUS.

What shall be done?

SCIPIO.

Here let it rest, till time abates his passion.
Nature is nature, *Lælius*, let the Wife
Say what they please. But now perhaps he dies.—
Haste! haste! and give him hope.—I have not time
To tell thee what.—Thy prudence will direct —
Whatever is consistent with my honour,
My duty to the publick, and my friendship
To him himself, say, promise, shall be done.
I hope returning reason will prevent
Our farther care.

LÆLIUS.

I fly with joy.

SCIPIO.

His life

Not only save, but *Sophonisba's* too :
For both I fear are in this passion mixt.

LÆLIUS.

It shall be done.

SCENE V.

SCIPIO *alone*.

If friendship suffers thus ;
When love pours in his added violence,
What are the pangs which *Masiniſſa* feels!

SCENE

SCENE VI.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

SOPHONISBA.

Yes, *Masiniſſa* loves me — Heavens ! how fond !
 But yet I know not what hangs on my ſpirit,
 A diſmal boding ; for this fatal *Scipio*,
 I dread his virtues ; this prevailing *Roman*,
 Even now perhaps deludes the generous king,
 Fires his ambition with miſtaken glory,
 Demands me from him ; for full well he knows,
 That, while I live, I muſt intend their ruin.

PHOENISSA.

Madam, theſe fears —

SOPHONISBA.

And yet it cannot be.
 Can *Scipio*, whom even hoſtile fame proclaims
 Of perfect honour, and of poliſh'd manners,
 Smooth, artful, winning, moderate, and wiſe,
 Make ſuch a wild demand ? Or, if he could,
 Can *Masiniſſa* grant it ? give his queen,
 Whom love and honour bind him to protect,
 Yield her a captive to triumphant *Rome* ?
 'Tis baſeneſs to ſuſpect it ; 'tis inhuman.

What then remains ? — Suppose they ſhould reſolve
 By right of war to ſeize me for their prize —
 Ay, there it kills ! — What can his ſingle arm

Against

Against the *Roman* power? that very power
 By which he stands restor'd? Distracting thought!
 Still o'er my head the rod of bondage hangs.
 Shame on my weakness.—This poor catching hope,
 This transient taste of joy, will only more
 Imbitter death.

PHOENISSA.

A moment will decide.

Madam, till then —

SOPHONISBA.

Would I had dy'd before!

And am I dreaming here? Here! from the *Romans*
 Beseeching I may live to swell their triumph?
 When my free spirit should ere now have join'd
 That great assembly, those devoted shades,
 Who scorn'd to live till liberty was lost,
 But ere their country fell, abhorr'd the light.

Whence this pale slave? he trembles with his message.

SCENE VII.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA; and to them a SLAVE,
 with a letter and poison from MASINISSA.

SLAVE kneeling.

This, Madam, from the king, and this.

SOPHONISBA.

Ha!—Stay.

(*Reads the Letter.*)

Rejoice,

Rejoice, *Phœnissa*! Give me joy, my friend!
For here is liberty! my fears are vain.
The hand of *Rome* can never touch me more!
Hail! perfect freedom, hail!

PHOENISSA.

How? what? my queen!
Ah! what is this?

(*Pointing to the poison.*)

SOPHONISBA.

The first of blessings, death.

PHOENISSA.

Alas! alas! can I rejoice in that?

SOPHONISBA.

Shift not thy colour at the sound of death;
For death appears not in a dreary light,
Seems not a blank to me, a loss of all
Those fond sensations, those enchanting dreams,
Which cheat a toiling world from day to day,
And form the whole of happiness they know.
It is to me perfection, glory, triumph.
Nay fondly would I chuse it, tho' persuaded
It were a long dark night without a morning,
To bondage far prefer it! since it is
Deliverance from a world where *Romans* rule,
Where violence prevails— And timely too —
Before my country falls; before I feel
As many stripes, as many chains, and deaths,
As there are lives in *Carthage*.—Glorious charter!
By which I hold immortal life and freedom,

Come,

Come, let me read thee once again. — And then,
Obey the mandate.

(Reads the letter aloud.)

MASINISSA to his QUEEN.

*The Gods know with what pleasure I would have kept
my faith to Sophonisba in another manner. But since this
fatal bowl alone can deliver thee from the Romans ; call
to mind thy father, thy country, that thou hast been the
wife of two kings ; and act up to the dictates of thy own
heart. I will not long survive thee.*

Oh, 'tis wondrous well !

Ye Gods of death who rule the *Stygian* gloom !
Ye who have greatly dy'd ! I come ! I come !
I die contented, since I die a queen,
By *Rome* untouch'd, unfullied by their power ;
So much their terror that I must not live.

And thou, go tell the king, if this is all
The nuptial present he can send his bride,
I thank him for it — But that death had worn
An easier face, before I trusted him.
Add, hither had he come, I could have taught
Him how to die. — I linger not, remember,
I stand not shivering on the brink of life ;
And, but these votive drops, which grateful thus

(Taking them from the poison)

To *Jove* the high *Deliverer* I shed,

Affure him that I drank it, drank it all,
With an unalter'd smile — Away.

(Drinks.)

SCENE VIII.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

SOPHONISBA.

My friend!

In tears, my friend! Dishonour not my death
With womanish complaints. Weep not for me,
Weep for thy self, *Phœnissa*, for thy country,
But not for me. There is a certain hour,
Which one would wish all undisturb'd and bright,
No care, no sorrow, no dejected passions;
And that is when we die, when hence we go,
Ne'er to be seen again; then let us spread
A bold exalted wing, and the last voice
We hear, be that of wonder and applause.

PHOENISSA.

Who with such virtue wishes not to die!

SOPHONISBA.

And is the sacred moment then so near?

The moment, when yon sun, those heavens, this earth
Hateful to me, polluted by the *Romans*,
And all the busy slavish race of men,

Shall sink at once ; and strait another state,
 New scenes, new joys, new faculties, new wonders,
 Rise on a sudden round : but this the gods
 In clouds and horror wrap, or none would live
 Oh to be there !—my breast begins to burn ;

My tainted heart grows sick.—Ah me ! *Phænissa*,
 How many virgins, infants, tender wretches,
 Must feel these pangs, ere *Carthage* is no more !

Soft—lead me to my couch—My shivering limbs,
 Do this last office, and then rest for ever.

I pray thee weep not, pierce me not with groans.

The king too here—Nay then my death is full !

SCENE IX.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA, MASINISSA, LÆLIUS,
 NARVA.

MASINISSA.

Has *Sophonisba* drank this cursed bowl ?

Oh horror ! horror ! what a sight is here !

SOPHONISBA.

Had I not drank it, *Masinissa*, then
 I had deserv'd it.

MASINISSA.

Exquisite distress !

Oh bitter, bitter fate ! and this last hope
 Compleats my woe.

SOPHONISBA.

When will these ears be deaf
To misery's complaint? These eyes be blind
To mischief wrought by *Rome*?

MASINISSA.

Too soon! too soon!—

Ah why so hasty? But a little while
Hadst thou delay'd this horrid draught; I then
Had been as happy, as I now am wretched!

SOPHONISBA.

What means this talk of hope? of coward waiting?

MASINISSA.

What have I done? Oh heavens! I cannot think
On my rash deed!—But while I talk, she dies!
And how? what? where am I then?—Say, canst thou
Forgive me, *Sophonisba*?

SOPHONISBA.

Yes, and more,

More than forgive thee, thank thee, *Masinissa*.
Hadst thou been weak, and dally'd with my freedom,
Till by proud *Rome* enslav'd; that injury
I never had forgiven.

MASINISSA.

I came with life!

Lælius and I from *Scipio* hasted hither;
But death was here before us—this vile poison!

SOPHONISBA.

With life!—There was some merit in the poison;

But this destroys it all.—And couldst thou think
 Me mean enough to take it?—Oh! *Phœnissa*,
 This mortal toil is almost at an end.—
 Receive my parting soul.

PHOENISSA.

Alas, my queen!

MASINISSA.

Dies! dies! and scorns me!—Mercy! *Sophonisba*!
 Grant one forgiving look, while yet thou canst;
 Or death itself, the grave cannot relieve me:
 But with the furies join'd, my frantic ghost
 Will howl for ever.—Quivering! and pale!
 Have I done this?

SOPHONISBA.

But for *Rome*

We might have been most happy.—I conjure thee
 Be mild to *Syphax*; for my sake regard him,
 And let thy rage against him die with me.
 Farewell!—'Tis done!—O never, never, *Carthage*,
 Shall I behold thee more!

(Dies.)

MASINISSA.

Dead! dead! oh dead!

Is there no death for me?

(Snatches *Lælius's sword* to stab himself.)

LÆLIUS.

Hold, *Masinissa*!

NARVA.

MASINISSA.

And wouldst thou make a coward of me, *Lælius*?
Have me survive that murder'd excellence?

Did she not stir? Ha! Who has shock'd my brain!
It whirls, it blazes.—Was it thou, old man?

NARVA.

Alas! alas!—good *Masinissa*, softly!
Let me conduct thee to thy couch.

MASINISSA.

The grave

Shall be my couch.—Ye cannot make me live!
Ye strive in vain!—Off!—crowd not thus around me!
For I will hear, see, think no more!—Thou sun,
Withhold thy hated beams! And all I want
Of thee, kind earth, is an immediate grave!
Ay, there she lies!—Why to that pallid sweetness
Can not I, Nature! lay my lips, and die!

(*Throws himself beside her.*)

LÆLIUS.

See there the ruins of the noble mind
When from calm reason passion tears the sway.
What pity she should perish!—Cruel war,
'Tis not the least misfortune in thy train,
That oft by thee, the brave destroy the brave.
She had a *Roman* soul; for every one
Who loves, like her, his country, is a *Roman*.

Whether on *Afric's* sandy plains he glows,
Or lives untam'd among *Riphæan* snows.

If generous liberty the breast inflame,
 The gloomy *Lybian* then deserves that name :
 And, warm with freedom under frozen skies,
 In farthest *Britain Romans* yet may rise.

The End of the Fifth Act.

EPI-

EPILOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mrs. CIBBER.

NOW, I'm afraid, the modest taste in vogue
Demands a strong, high-season'd epilogue.
Else might some silly soul take pity's part,
And odious virtue sink into the heart.

Our squeamish author scruples this proceeding;
He says it hurts sound morals, and good breeding:
Nor Sophonisba would he here produce,
A glaring model, of no private use.
Ladies, he bid me say, behold your Cato.
What tho' no Stoic she, nor read in Plato?
Yet sure she offer'd, for her country's sake,
A sacrifice, which Cato could not make —
—Already, now, these wicked men are sneering,
Some wresting what one says, and others leering.
I vow they have not force for — publick spirit.
That, ladies, must be your superior merit.

Mercy forbid! we should lay down our lives;
Like these old, Punic, barbarous heathen wives.

Spare

*Spare Christian blood.—But sure the devil's in her,
Who for her country would not lose a pinner.*

—Lard! how could such a creature shew her face?

How?—Just as you do there—thro' Brussels Lace.

The Roman fair, the public in distress,

Gave up the dearest ornaments of dress.

How much more cheaply might you gain applause?

—One yard of Ribban and two ells of Gauze.

And Gauze each deep-read critic must adore;

Your Roman ladies dress'd in Gauze all o'er.

Should you fair patriots, come to dress so thin;

How clear might all your—sentiments be seen.

To foreign looms no longer owe your charms;

Nor make their trade more fatal than their arms.

Each British dame, who courts her country's praise,

By quitting these outlandish modes, might raise

(Not from yon powder'd band, so thin, and spruce)

Ten able bodied men, for—publick use.

But now a serious word about the play.—

Auspicious smile on this his first essay;

Ye generous Britons! your own sons inspire;

Let your applauses fan their native fire.

Then other Shakespears yet may rouse the stage,

And other Otways melt another age.

*A NUPTIAL SONG, intended to have been
inserted in the Fourth Act.*

COME, gentle *Venus*! and assuage
 A warring world, a bleeding age.
 For nature lives beneath thy ray,
 The wintry tempests haste away,
 A lucid calm invests the sea,
 Thy native deep is full of thee;
 The flowering earth, where'er you fly,
 Is all o'er spring, all fun the sky.
 A genial spirit warms the breeze;
 Unseen among the blooming trees,
 The feather'd lovers tune their throat,
 The desert growls a soften'd note,
 Glad o'er the meads the cattle bound,
 And love and harmony go round.

But chief into the human heart
 You strike the dear delicious dart;
 You teach us pleasing pangs to know,
 To languish in luxurious woe,
 To feel the generous passions rise,
 Grow good by gazing, mild by sighs;
 Each happy moment to improve,
 And fill the perfect year with love.

Come,

Come, thou delight of heaven and earth !
 To whom all creatures owe their birth ;
 Oh come, sweet smiling ! tender, come !
 And yet prevent our final doom.
 For long the furious god of war
 Has crush'd us with his iron car,
 Has raged along our ruined plains,
 Has foil'd them with his cruel stains,
 Has sunk our youth in endless sleep,
 And made the widow'd virgin weep.
 Now let him feel thy wonted charms ;
 Oh take him to thy twining arms !
 And, while thy bosom heaves on his,
 While deep he prints the humid kifs,
 Ah then ! his stormy heart controul,
 And sigh thyself into his soul.

A G A-

*Come, thou delight of heaven and earth
To whom all creatures owe their birth
Oh come, sweet smiling, tender, come
And yet prevent our final doom
For long the furious god of war
Has crush'd us with his iron car
Has raged along our ruined plains
Has soil'd them with his cruel stains
Has sunk our youth in endless sleep*

AGAMEMNON.

*And take him to thy twining arms!
And, while thy bosom heaves on his,
While deep he prints the humid kiss,
Ah then! his former heart controul
And sigh thyself into his soul*

TRAGEDY.

AGAMEWON.

TRAGEDY.

timony of the most distinguished and zeal-

ous Respect, due no less to Your Ami-

able Virtues, than to Your High Rank.

TO HER

ROYAL HIGHNESS

MADAM,

THE

Princess of *Wales*.

MADAM,

I Humbly beg leave to put this Tragedy under the Protection of Your Royal Highness; and hope You will condescend to accept of it, as a Testimony

DEDICATION.

timony of the most unfeigned and zealous Respect, due no less to Your Amiable Virtues, than to Your High Rank, from,

MADAM,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

Most Dutiful and most

Obedient Humble Servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

PROLOGUE.

By the Author of EURYDICE.

Spoken by Mr. Quin.

WHEN this decisive night, at length, appears,
The night of every author's hopes and fears;
What shifts to bribe applause, poor poets try?
In all the forms of wit they court and lye:
These meanly beg it, as an alms; and Those,
By boastful bluster dazzle and impose.

Nor poorly fearful, nor securely vain
Ours would, by honest ways, that grace obtain,
Would, as a free-born wit, be fairly try'd:
And then—let truth and candour, fair, decide.
He courts no friend, who blindly comes to praise;
He dreads no foe—but whom his faults may raise.

Indulge a generous pride, that bids him own,
He aims to please, by noble means, alone;
By what may win the judgment, wake the heart,
Inspiring nature, and directing art;
By scenes, so wrought, so rais'd, as may command
Applause, more from the head, than from the hand.

Important is the moral we would teach:
(Oh may this Island practise what we preach!)
Vice in its first approach with care to shun;
The wretch who once engages, is undone.
Crimes lead to greater crimes, and link so streight,
What first was accident, at last is fate:
Guilt's hapless servant sinks into a slave;
And virtue's last sad strugglings cannot save.

“ As such our fair attempt, we hope to see
“ Our judges,—here at least,—from influence free;
“ One place,—unbias'd yet by party-rage,—
“ Where only honour votes,—the British stage.
“ We ask for justice, for indulgence sue:
“ Our last best licence must proceed from you.

Persons

Persons represented.

<i>Agamemnon,</i>	} by {	Mr. <i>Quin.</i>
<i>Egisthus,</i>		Mr. <i>Milward.</i>
<i>Melisander,</i>		Mr. <i>Cibber.</i>
<i>Arcas,</i>		Mr. <i>Wright.</i>
<i>Orestes,</i>		Mr. <i>Green.</i>
<i>Taltbybius Herald</i>		Mr. <i>Harvard.</i>
<i>Officers, &c.</i>		

<i>Clytemnestra,</i>	} by {	Mrs. <i>Porter.</i>
<i>Cassandra,</i>		Mrs. <i>Cibber.</i>
<i>Electra,</i>		Miss <i>Brett.</i>
<i>Attendant of Clytemnestra,</i>		Mrs. <i>Furnival.</i>
<i>Trojan Captives, &c.</i>		

SCENE.

The Palace of Agamemnon, in Mycenæ.

AGAMEMNON.

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA *sitting in a disconsolate posture,*
and her ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

O Clytemnestra! O my royal mistress!
Can then no comfort sooth your woes a while?
E'er since that flaming signal of sackt Troy,
That signal fix'd and promis'd by the king,
Was seen some nights ago, nor food has pass'd
Your loathing lips, nor sleep has bless'd your eyes.
Or if perhaps a transient slumber hush'd
Your sighs a moment, and restrain'd your tears;
Sudden,

Sudden, you, starting wildly, would exclaim—

Of Guilt, *Egisthus*, *Troy* and *Agamemnon*.

Sure, 'tis too much, my queen.

CLYTEMNESTRA.—

Away! away!

Since my lost state admits of no relief,

To that sad comfort of the wretched leave me,

To yield me to my sorrows.

ATTENDANT.—

Hear me, madam.

Once the dear burden of these aged arms!

My tender care from life's first opening bud!

My joy! my glory! hear your faithful servant,

And, let me add, your friend.—In reason's eye,

That never judges on a partial view,

Far less than your misfortune is your guilt.—

Your guilt — Forgive me, 'tis too harsh a word,

For what deserves compassion more than blame.

I know the treacherous ways by which you sunk,

From pleasing peace, to these unhappy fears,

This anxious tumult. —

CLYTEMNESTRA.—

Hide me from the view!

All comfort is in vain.— Away!

ATTENDANT.—

Allow me,

To plead your injur'd cause against your self.

When *Agamemnon* led the *Greeks* to *Troy*,

And left you, madam, for the pomp of war,

Left.

Left you the pride of *Greece* in full-blown beauty,
 The kindest mother, and the fondest wife ;
 If Fame says true, for *Trojan* captives left you —
 But that apart.—How did he leave you, say ?
 Afflicted, out-rag'd, as a queen and mother;
 Betray'd to *Aulis* with your first-born Hope,
 The blooming *Iphigenia*, under feint
 Of her immediate marriage to *Achilles* ;
 And there no sooner at the wind-bound fleet
 Arriv'd, but you beheld her spotless blood
 Stream on the sully'd altar of *Diana*,
 The price of winds, of a dear-purchas'd gale,
 To bear them on to *Troy*. Thus pierc'd with grief,
 Then fir'd by turns to rage, almost to vengeance,
 At an ambitious cruel haughty husband ;
 While all your passions were together mix'd,
 And ready for a change ; was you not left
 In a submissive soothing lover's power,
 Ordain'd your partner in the sovereign rule,
 O'er *Argos* and *Mycenæ*, but to you
 As pliant still as *Agamemnon* stately ?

CLYTEMNESTRA, *rising*.

Alas ! too true ! You touch the source of woe.
 Why did you leave me, barbarous *Agamemnon* ?
 Why leave me weeping o'er a murder'd daughter ?
 Why helpless leave me to a troubled mind ?
 Ah ! why yourself betray me to a lover ?
 What arts *Egisthus* us'd too well I know ;
 All that can softly steal, or gayly charm,

The

116 A G A M E M N O N.

The heart of woman — Hence, dear sad ideas !
 Destroyers hence ! And dare you tempt me still,
 Perfidious *Sirens* ! in that very moment
 When your false charms have wreckt my peace for ever ?
 Oh, nature ! wherefore, nature, are we form'd
 One contradiction ? the continual sport
 Of fighting powers ? Oh ! wherefore hast thou sown
 Such war within us, such unequal conflict,
 Between slow reason and impetuous passion ?
 Passion resistless hurries us away,
 Ere lingering reason to our aid can come,
 And to upbraid us then it only serves.
 Tormentor, cease !

ATTENDANT.

You wrong yourself too much.
 Think, madam, how for years you baffled love :
 Nor could *Egisthus*, tho' he touch'd your heart,
 Tho' many a midnight tear, and secret sigh,
 To me, and me alone, disclos'd the pangs,
 That dim'd your fading cheek ; yet could he not,
 With all his arts, his love, submission, charms,
 O'ercome the struggling purpose of your soul ;
 Till *Melisander*, to a desert isle,
 He banish'd from your ear.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, *Melisander* !
 Given to the beasts a prey, or wilder famine ;
 Ah, perish'd friend ! serene directing light,
 By *Agamemnon* left to guide my counsels ;
 Whom every science, every muse adorn'd,

While

While the good honest heart enrich'd them all;
 Oh hadst thou still remain'd, then I, this day,
 Had been as glorious as I now am wretched!
 There breathes a felt divinity in virtue,
 In candid unassuming generous virtue,
 Whose very silence speaks; and which inspires,
 Without proud formal lessons a disdain
 Of mean injurious vice. But lost with him,
 With *Melisander*, reason, honour, pride,
 Truth, sound advice, my better genius fled;
 I friendless, flatter'd, importun'd and charm'd
 Was left alone with all-seducing love;
 Love to the future blind, each sober thought,
 Each consequence despising, scorning all,
 But what its own enchanting dreams suggest.
 What could I do?—Away! self-flattering guilt!
 I should have thought, when honour once is fully'd,
 Not weeping mercy's tears can wash it clean;
 And that one blot on mine diffus'd a stain
 O'er the proud honour of a wedded king,
 And o'er my children's, my poor blameless children's!
 Whose cheeks will kindle at their mother's name:
 I should have thought—Would I could think no more!
 To think is torture!

ATTENDANT.

What avails it, madam—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O *Melisander*! If the dead could hear,
 I would invoke thy friendly influence now,

Would

Would wish thee present in this hour of trouble.
 Perhaps there is in wisdom, gentle wisdom,
 That knows our frailties, therefore can forgive,
 Some healing comfort for a guilty mind,
 Some power to charm it into peace again,
 And bid it smile a new with right affections.
 No! fruitless wish!—It cannot, cannot be!
Egisthus who may henceforth give me laws,
 Dread of discovery, that worst tyrant, shame,
 And my own conscious blotted heart forbid it;
 Forbid retreat —

ATTENDANT.

Madam, behold the man,
 Who, then upon the watch, observ'd the signal
 Of conquer'd *Troy*, and now attends your orders
 To give a full account of what he saw.

SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *her* ATTENDANTS, *and the* MAN
who observ'd the signal.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Are you then sure that you beheld this signal?
 Or was it not some vision of the brain,
 That painted, while you slept, your waking wish?
 Or else perhaps some meteor of the night?

MAN.

M A N.

Madam, *Troy* doubtless lies one heap of ruins ;
I saw the signal of its fate distinctly.
The night was dark and still. A heavier gloom
Ne'er cover'd earth. In low'ring clouds, the stars
Were muffled deep ; and not one ray, below,
O'er all *Mycenæ* glimmer'd, or around it.
When strait, at farthest east, a ruddy light
Sprung up, and, wide-encreasing, roll'd along ;
By turns diminish'd, and by turns renew'd,
A wave of fire : at last, it flam'd, confess'd,
From isle to isle, and beachy point to point :
Till the last blaze at *Nauplia* ended, plain.
A glorious fight ! and as a *Greek* rejoic'd me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How fits the wind ?

M A N.

It blows from *Troy*, direct ;
A bold and steady gale.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis well. Retire.

Your care and faithful pains shall be rewarded.

SCENE III.

CLYTEMNESTRA, her ATTENDANT.

CLYTEMNESTRA,

He comes ! he comes ! the hapless victor comes !
Even now his trophy'd vessel streaks the main,
And

And ploughs the billows with triumphant prow;
 Or, by glad crowds receiv'd, perhaps, he hails
 His native shore, and presses on to shame.
 Ev'n now with glory charg'd, with conquest gay,
 Crown'd with the laurels of ten famous years,
 He dreams to join them to the peaceful olive;
 And after rugged toils and perilous war,
 Soft to repose him on the myrtle bed
 Of calm domestic bliss. How vain the hopes!
 How short the prospect of believing man!
 I dare not look before me, dare not paint
 The rising storm.

ATTENDANT.

Behold *Egisthus*, Madam.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Leave me.

SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS.

EGISTHUS, *after some silence.*

And is it thus, O *Clytemnestra*,
 Thus that, in hours of danger, lovers meet?

(pausing.)

Still coldy silent, still the look averted,
 Where not one softness glows? While anger, fear,
 Disgust and sick repentance, shifting, cloud
 Your vary'd cheek. 'Tis plain you never lov'd.

CLY.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh that I never had !

EGISTHUS.

You never did.

The very power to wish it proves you did not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

He ne'er deserv'd my love, who dares suspect it.

EGISTHUS.

Not to suspect it weakness were and folly.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nor only doubt ; believe your doubts.

EGISTHUS.

I do.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You do !

EGISTHUS.

Nay more, am of their truth assur'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis base, ungrateful, an ungenerous insult,

To tell me this. Urge not too far, *Egisthus*,

Urge not too far my guilt-dejected spirit.

Tho' you have traml'd on my haughty virtue,

That noble pride of soul, which knows no fear,

And bears no insult ; yet to you, at least,

To you of all mankind, I will be bold,

As I had never err'd, will be a queen,

The blood of *Jove*, be *Clytemnestra* still.

EGISTHUS.

Be temperate, madam : I have told you nothing,

But that I am not worthy of your love.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Curse on that pride ! which, with affected brow,
Humility conceals. And am I then so vile,
So lost to reason, honour, common honour ;
As without love, that all-compelling fury,
Without debasing, thoughtless, blind blind love ;
To bow me from the height of happy life,
To this low fearful state of coward shame ?
Mistake me not—I would not waste one word,
One passing word, affronted thus to save you
From jealousy's worst rage ; did not, alas !
A kind of mournful justice to my self
Tear from my swelling heart the mean confession.
How art thou fallen ! to what dishonour fallen !
Unhappy *Clytemnestra* !

EGISTHUS.

Harsh Construction !

And yet these frowns delight, that anger charms me.

O more than lovely ! O majestic fair-one !
Since you then knew the jealous force of love,
Forgive its tender fears, its fond offence ;
Offence I could not mean.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ill-fated she !

Who must forgive.

EGISTHUS

Nay rather cast me from you,
Than thus upbraid me with so forc'd a pardon.

O

O *Clytemnestra*! where are now those looks,
 Those looks of smiling heaven, of radiant sweetness,
 That wak'd our morn of love? Within whose sphere,
 No evil durst approach, no sadness dwell;
 While the charm'd gazer knew nor fear nor danger?
 And set they then at last in gloomy quarrels?
 Let us not quarrel. Why should lovers quarrel?
 Life is for that too short, too precious time;
 These moments chiefly, these impetuous moments,
 That to the brink of ruin seem to roll
 Our mingled fate. Even now —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis true! 'Tis true!

Alas! methinks, in every hollow blast,
 That shakes this palace, *Agamemnon* comes.
 Yes, yes, *Egisthus*, still a proof remains,
 A matchless proof of love, I mean to give you.
 Glad will I throw this regal pomp aside,
 And, instant, with you seek some distant country,
 Some gloomy *Thracian* Dale, where piny *Hemus*
 May wrap us in impenetrable shade:
 There, there, the coarsest life, fed by hard toil,
 Will be luxurious ease to what I feel,
 To this big pang that labours at my heart,
 And fires my mingling passions into anguish.
 Quick! let us fly, *Egisthus*, fly this moment!
 The next may seize us, bind us down to shame,
 Detested shame!

G 2

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS.

What! *Clytemnestra*! fly!
 That is indeed the road direct to shame,
 To infamy for ever. He who flies,
 In war or peace, who his great purpose yields,
 He is the only villain of this world:
 But he who labours firm and gains his point,
 Be what it will, which crowns him with success,
 He is the son of fortune and of fame,
 By those admir'd, those specious villains most,
 That else had bellow'd out reproach against him.

Besides your husband, your vain-glorious husband,
 Proud *Agamemnon*, who ten years has warr'd
 At *Troy*, to scourge your sister *Helen*'s rape,
 Dream you that he would not pursue our flight,
 Tho' we took shelter in *Cimmerian* shades,
 And drag us back, the scorn of hissing *Greece*,
 To then deserv'd, to true, unpity'd shame.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Excuse my weaker heart. But how, *Egisthus*,
 How shall I bear an injur'd husband's eye?
 The fiercest foe wears not a look so dreadful,
 As does the man we wrong.

EGISTHUS.

Madam, your fears
 Cast a false glare upon your troubled reason,
 That blinds it quite.—An injur'd husband he!
 He wrong'd! No, *Clytemnestra* never, never,
 Can never wrong her tyrant *Agamemnon*,

Tyrant

Tyrant of common *Greece* ; can never wrong
The man who leaves her ten regardless years,
For the vain honours of a foolish war ;
Nay, who consum'd those years, if fame speaks true,
In nothing less than war ; instead of war,
In shameful squabbles with his nobler friends,
About their captive females, training out
An amorous revel rather than a war,
Far from his country, family and queen.
And can you wrong this false-one ? Think of *Aulis*.
How basely to that port you was betray'd,
And what dire nuptials waited there your daughter.
Think with what price he bought his cruel trophies.
Behold the first-born blossom of your youth,
Your *Iphigenia*, her mild eyes dejected,
Her cheek o'ercast with fear, her bosom bare,
An helpless, harmless, uncomplaining victim,
Stab'd by the murderous *Calchas* ; whilst her father,
Her unrelenting father, to protect
The sacrifice, stands by. Behold, she bleeds,
Pours the rich stream she drew from that fair bosom,
Falls like a drooping flower untimely cut ;
And all to purchase for her fire's impatience,
From some fell demon that bely'd *Diana*,
A rising gale. The gale begins to blow,
The pendants flutter ; when away he goes,
Gayly he goes ; and leaves a wretched mother,
To weep her murder'd child.—If yet one spark
Of wonted spirit burns in *Clytemnestra*,

If she still lives to justice and to nature;
 These, these are wrongs, that call aloud for vengeance;
 And there are hands that boldly—start not, madam—
 That will with pride avenge you.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ha! what hands?
 What vengeance, say? Touch not so wild a string;
 It wakes new discord in my jarring soul.
 To the just gods, not us, pertaineth vengeance.
 I cannot, will not, e'er consent to — Gods!
 Where roves my tongue?—You did not mention that,
 You did not mean it sure — Oh spare, *Egisthus*,
 In pity spare my last remains of virtue!
 Oh make me not beyond recovery vile!
 A horror to myself!—How wretched they,
 Who feel, yet cannot save, their dying virtue!

(*A shout heard.*)

What means this transport of the madning people?
 Oh my presaging heart!—Save me!—Again!
 Ah! little think they how their joy distracts me!

EGISTHUS.

Some move this way—Resume your temper, madam.

S C E N E

S C E N E V.

To CLYTEMNYSTRA an OFFICER *belonging to the court.*

OFFICER.

Madam, the king is near, from *Nauplia* comes ;
But such rejoicing crouds around him throng,
As makes his journey flow. Just now arriv'd
Talthybius brings the news, and craves admittance.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Conduct him hither.

S C E N E VI.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *alone.*

Oh too faithful signal !

Now must I take another step in vice.

Down, stubborn heart ! and learn dissimulation ;

Yes, learn to smile, tho' sorrow wrap thee round ;

Learn to be friends with baseness.—See ! how gay

This herald strides along ! Mistaken man !

G 4

S C E N E

S C E N E VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, TALTHYBIUS, *with some Grecian soldiers that attend him.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Welcome, *Talthybius*; welcome, ye brave *Greeks*.
How fares the king?

TALTHYBIUS.

Madam, the king is well;
Health, happiness, and glory, join to crown him.
His heart, impatient to confer with yours,
Sends me before him with its warmest wishes,
Its warmest gratulations. Tell, he said,

“ Go tell my *Clytemnestra*, that the thoughts
“ Of meeting her awake a dearer joy
“ Than conquest ever gave: even tedious seems
“ My people’s love, that loses me a moment.

This crown which circled once the royal brows
Of *Hecuba*, of *Priam*’s lofty queen,
He prays you to accept.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There set it down!

I own, *Talthybius*, the soft moisture fills
My womanish eyes, while on the sudden turns
Of fate I think, on fortune’s sad reverses.
Oft when blind mortals think themselves secure,
In height of bliss, they touch the brink of ruin.
But sure your voyage has been wondrous quick,
Not three full days.—Is all the fleet returned?

TAL-

TALTYBIUS.

No, madam ; none, except this single ship,
Which bore the king : the rest are scatter'd wide.

When to the joyous breeze we spread our sails,
And left that bay, where *Simois* and *Scamander*
Mix with the rapid *Hellepont* ; while *Troy*,
Or what was *Troy*, yet wreathing smoak to heaven,
And *Ida*'s woody top, receding, sunk
Beneath the trembling main, the sky was fair ;
And, wing'd our course with slender airs, we sail'd,
Till strait, as evening fell, the fluttering gale,
Encreasing gradual, from the red north-east,
Blew stiff and fierce. At last the tempest howl'd.
Next morning, nought but angry seas and skies
Appear'd, conflicting, round. Mean time, right on,
Our strong-ribb'd vessel drove before the blast,
That, falling somewhat off its fury, gave us
A quick auspicious voyage. Safe, we pass'd
The *Cyclad* isles, that, o'er the troubled deep,
Seem'd then to float amidst the mingling storm.
Only at one, with much ado, we touch'd,
Nor without risque.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And why ?

TALTYBIUS.

Madam, compell'd
By sacred pity. On the foaming beach,
A miserable figure beck'ning stood,
Horrid and wild, with famine worn away.

His plaintive voice, half by the murmuring surge
 Absorpt, just reach'd our ears. In *Greek* he call'd,
 And strong adjur'd us by the gentle gods,
 That make the wretched their peculiar care,
 To bear him thence, from savage solitude,
 Into the chearful haunts of men again.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What?—Of condition look'd he?

TALTHYBIUS.

So he seem'd;

'Tho' dim'd by helpless solitary life.
 The king regards him much—Forgive me, madam;
 I see the rueful image but disturbs
 Your generous soul.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I thank you, good *Talthybius*;
 And from the king himself will learn the rest.
 This ring, on which a victory is carv'd
 With curious art, befits the news you bring:
 I am your debtor still; and, soldiers, yours.

End of the First Act.

ACT

A C T II. S C E N E I.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ATTENDANT.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A Riv'd so soon! I am not half prepar'd :
My features all are sunk with conscious shame ;
My eyes are yet too tender to dissemble.

ATTENDANT.

Madam, be firm. Wipe off these gloomy tears,
In which too plain is read your troubled soul.
Just now the trumpet spoke the king's approach.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis come, at last, the trying hour is come !
Oh that my heart were hard, and features false !—
Again these trumpets swell —

ATTENDANT.

A moment, madam,
A moment will betray you.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Open, earth,
And swallow up my shame !—What can I do ?
Where look ? what say ? confusion ! torture !

ATTENDANT.

Madam—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, coward that I am! Was there no dagger,
To save this ten-fold death?

ATTENDANT.

Hark! loud and near,
The triumph comes.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well.—give me breath—

*(Endeavouring to compose her agitation.)*AGAMEMNON, *behind the Scenes.*

A moment,

Leave me, my friends.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ha! heard you not his voice?

Yes, yes, 'tis he! Go, bring my children hither:
They may relieve me.

ATTENDANT.

O remember!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Heavens!

SCENE

SCENE II.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA.

AGAMEMNON.

Where is my life ! my love ! my *Clytemnestra* !
O let me press thee to my fluttering soul,
That is on wing to mix itself with thine !
O thou, for whom I live, for whom I conquer,
Than glory brighter ! O my *Clytemnestra* !
Now, in this dear embrace, I lose the toils
Of ten years war ; absence, with all its pains,
Is by this charming moment wip'd away.
All-bounteous gods ! Sure, never was a heart
So full, so blest as mine.— (*Discovering her disorder.*

But whence, my fairest !

What mean these tears ?—Not tears of happy love,
Such as I shed —What means that clouded look,
Whose downcast sweetness will not shine upon me ?
Why this cold meeting ? Why unkindly damp'd
My ardor thus ? Oh speak, my *Clytemnestra* !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Forgive me, *Agamemnon* ; but I cannot,
Alas ! I cannot see your face again,
Without reflecting where I saw you last.
Aulis is present to my eyes anew,
The ships, the chiefs, the guards, the bloody *Calchas*,
All the dire pomp of sacrifice around ;

Anew

134 A G A M E M N O N.

Anew my daughter bleeds, basely deceiv'd !
And when I see that awful brow, that doom'd her,
Can *Agamemnon* wonder at my tears !

AGAMEMNON.

Why will my *Clytemnestra* add new stings
To what here rankles but too deep already ?
Ah ! why impute to me the work of fate ?
'Tis not indulging private inclination,
The selfish passions, that sustains the world,
And lends its rulers grace ; no, 'tis not thence
That glory springs, and high immortal deeds :
The public good, the good of others, still
Must bear fond nature down, in him who dares
Aspire to worthy rule ; imperious honour
Still o'er the most distinguish'd lords it most.
Was it for me ?—Let even your passions judge —
For *Agamemnon* was it, when ordain'd,
By common voice the general of the *Greeks* ;
While twenty kings beneath my banner march'd ;
And while around me full assembled *Greece*,
Indignant, kindled at your sister's rape,
On her old native foe demanding vengeance,
On faithless *Asia* : Was it then for me,
To quench this glorious flame ? And to refuse
One life to thousands, to those generous thousands,
That for my honour, for the dearer honour
Of *Clytemnestra*'s family, stood all
Prepar'd to die ? If to the mingled voice
Of honour, duty, glory, public good,

Of

Of the commanding gods, I had been deaf;
 And, in the feeble father, poorly sunk
 The *Greek*, the chief, the patriot and the king,
 Greater than king, the general of the *Greeks*;
 Then you yourself, my *Clytemnestra*'s self,
 Must (let her heart avow the truth) have scorn'd me,
 Nor think it was an easy resignation.
 Oh *Clytemnestra*! Had you seen within,
 What here within my tortur'd bosom pass'd;
 To that my battles since were only sport.
 No, not the kindest mother, bath'd in tears,
 As o'er her agonizing babe she hangs,
 Feels what I suffer'd then — You may remember —
 Again the father melts me at the thought —
 You may remember how I hid my face;
 Asham'd to let the *Greeks* around behold
 The tears, that misbecame their general's cheek.
 Then cease to blame what rather merits pity,
 I might add praise.—He, who the father's heart
 More tender has than mine, too tender has it.
 I love my children, as a father should;
 Besides, I love them from a softer cause,
 I love my *Clytemnestra*.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Had, alas!
 Had *Agamemnon* lov'd me, would he, nay,
 Could he have left me in the rage of grief,
 My daughter yet fresh bleeding in my fight?

Left

Left me so long? love surely must have found,
 In the wide round of ten revolving years,
 Some way to see me, to prevent these sorrows —
 Why was I thus abandon'd, *Agamemnon*?

AGAMEMNON.

Let me kiss off these tears. O beauteous tears!
 If shed by doubting love, if shed for absence,
 Instead of these reproaches, ask me rather,
 How I that absence bore: and here all words
 All eloquence is dumb, to speak the pangs,
 That lurk'd beneath the rugged brow of war.
 When glaring day was clos'd, and hush'd the camp,
 Oh! then, amid ten thousand other cares,
 Those stung the keenest that remember'd thee,
 That on my long-left *Clytemnestra* thought,
 On what wild seas and mountains lay between us.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Unhappy man!

AGAMEMNON.

What says my *Clytemnestra*?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Unhappy mortals! by vain words deceiv'd,
 To their own pride, to joyless honour slaves.

AGAMEMNON.

He, he, alone, can claim a right to bliss,
 Who has fulfill'd the painful task of honour.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But what avails a right to vanish'd bliss?

AGA-

AGAMEMNON.

Let me once more adjure thee, *Clytemnestra*,
By every tender name of love adjure thee,
To lose in kind oblivion these our past—
I would not call them quarrels—Ah! there was,
There was a time—I will indulge the thought—
When everlasting transport tun'd our souls:
When join'd to vernal life, the spring of love
Around us gayly blow'd! and heaven and earth,
All smiling nature look'd delighted on.
Yet, would my *Clytemnestra* lend her aid,
I know a passion still more deeply charming
Than fever'd youth e'er felt; and that is love,
By long experience mellow'd into friendship.
How far beyond that froward child of fancy!
With beauty pleas'd a while, anon disgusted,
Seeking some other toy; how far more noble
Is this bright offspring of unchanging reason,
That fonder grows with age and charms for ever!

It is not often, *Clytemnestra*, thus,
That I submit to double my intreaties;
But, oh destroy not the collected hopes
Of life and love! Oh make not conquest hateful!
I shall abhor it, if it cost me thee,
Cost me thy love. A daughter was too much,
And ten years absence from my *Clytemnestra*.
Add not to these a loss I cannot bear,
The loss of thee, thou loveliest of thy sex!
And once the kindest!

CLY-

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh!

AGAMEMNON.

Turn not away;

There is relenting goodness in thy look.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas! untimely fondness—*Agamemnon!*

Too generous *Agamemnon!* you distress me.

Would you were not so kind, so tender, now!

Or ne'er had been so cruel!

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis unjust

To call me cruel. Fate, the Gods, our fortune

Were cruel to us both—What could I more

To sooth our parting woes, and ease my absence?

I left you *Melifander* to advise you,

Left you the wisest, faithfullest and best—

Oh whisp'ring nature! Are not these my children?

SCENE III.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA,

ORESTES.

AGAMEMNON.

My daughter! my *Electra!*

ELECTRA.

O my father!

AGA-

AGAMEMNON.

Come to my arms, my boy ! my dear *Orestes* !
In whom I live anew, my younger self !
And thou, *Electra* ; in thy opening cheek
I mark thy mother's bloom : even so she look'd,
Such the mild light with which her beauty dawn'd.
Oh thou soft image of my *Clytemnestra* !
My other *Iphigenia* !

ELECTRA,

Oh my father !
My joy ! my pride ! my glory ! whom, in dreams,
I oft have seen, as if return'd from *Troy* ;
But still unwelcome morning, with a tear,
Wip'd out the dear illusion of the night.
And is it then no more a faithless vision ?
Oh 'tis my father ! whose departure hence,
And *Iphigenia*'s death I just remember.
How glorious *Iphigenia*, was thy death !
A death I envy rather than lament.
Who would not die to gain immortal fame,
Deliver *Greece*, and crown a father's glory ?

AGAMEMNON.

Come to my arms again, my generous daughter !
And thou my son ! O that thy tender years
Had suffer'd thee to share our toils at *Troy* !
'Tis war that forms the prince : 'tis hardship, toil ;
'Tis sleepless nights, and never-resting days ;
'Tis pain, 'tis danger, 'tis affronted death ;
'Tis equal fate for all, and changing fortune ;

That

That rear the mind to glory, that inspire
The noblest virtues and the gentlest manners.
Where shall I find, to teach thee these, *Orestes*,
Another *Troy*?

O R E S T E S.

How happy had I been !
To have beheld what I must only hear !
But I will hear it often, every day ;
Will learn your story, study your example ;
Will try to mix your virtues with your blood,
And not disgrace the laurels I inherit.
My bosom flutters with I know not what —
— Forgive me, Sir, I am too young to say it —
But something here I feel, which bids me hope
That I shall not betray my father's honour.

A G A M E M N O N.

Son of my soul ! — Look here, my *Clytemnestra* !
Look here and weep with tenderness and transport !
What is all tasteless luxury to this ?
To these best joys, which holy love bestows ?
O nature ! parent nature ! thou, alone,
Art the true judge of what can make us happy !

Enter an officer belonging to the court.

O F F I C E R.

Egisthus, Sir, attends.

A G A M E M N O N.

Go, bid him enter.

Retire, my *Clytemnestra*, my dear children :
We soon shall meet again, 'till then farewell.

S C E N E

SCENE IV.

AGAMEMNON.

Obeys me, features, for one supple moment :
 You shall not long be tortur'd. Here, in courts,
 We must not wear the foldier's honest face.
 He little thinks I have him in the snare
 Of *Melifander*, whom, in my return,
 I from that desert island chanc'd to save,
 To which the ruffian—

SCENE V.

AGAMEMNON, EGISTHUS.

EGISTHUS.

Health to *Agamemnon* !
 And happiness responsive to his glory !

AGAMEMNON.

Cousin, I greet you well.

EGISTHUS.

Forgive me, Sir.

You have surpriz'd us with this quick return :
 For by that signal, whose illustrious flame
 Rejoic'd all *Greece*, we did not hope your presence
 These three days hence. Forgive, that, unprepar'd,
 We only with that joy, that transport, wonder,
 Which swell each *Grecian* bosom, thus receive you.

And

And truly such a burst I have not seen
 Of that best triumph. City, country, all,
 Is in a gay triumphant tempest tost.
 I scarce could press along. The trumpet's voice
 Is lost in loud repeated shouts that raise
 Your name to heaven. Ten thousand eyes, below,
 Ake to behold the conqueror of *Troy*.

AGAMEMNON.

The noblest praise that can salute my ear,
 The sweetest music, is my people's joy.
 But sure your tongue has done it ample justice;
 Trust me, you blazon a description well.
 I have not heard so much obliging speech
 These many years.

EGISTHUS.

Misconstrue not my zeal:

On the full heart obedient language waits.

I feel so deep your glory, *Agamemnon*,
 As mingles with my joy a sort of passion,
 That almost touches envy. O ye gods!
 Has, while I liv'd, a war, the most renown'd
 Which any age e'er saw, or shall again
 Be seen; a war, whose never-dying fame
 Will cover earth, and reach remotest time,
 Has such a war adorn'd my days, and I
 Not shar'd its glory? Pining here, unknown,
 In nameless peace—how have I lost my life!

AGAMEMNON.

This ardor is the mode. But know, *Egisthus*,

That

That ruling a free people well in peace,
 Without or yielding or usurping power;
 Maintaining firm the honour of the laws,
 Yet sometimes softening their too rigid doom,
 As mercy may require; steering the state,
 Thro' factious storms, or the more dangerous calms
 Of peace, by long continuance grown corrupt;
 Besides the fair career which fortune opens
 To the mild glories of protected arts,
 To bounty, to beneficence, to deeds
 That give the gods themselves their brightest beams:
 Yes, know, that these are, in true glory equal,
 If not superior, to deluding conquest:
 Nor less demand they conduct, courage, care,
 And persevering toil.

EGISTHUS.

Say thankless toil,
 Harsh and unpleasing; that instead of praise
 And due reward, meets oftner scorn, reproach,
 Fierce opposition to the clearest measures;
 Injustice, banishment, or death itself:
 Such is the nature of malignant man.
 Not so the victor's meed: Him all approve,
 Him all admire.

AGAMEMNON.

Yet tho' a toilsome task,
 Tho' an ungrateful labour oft to rule;
 I not so hardly of mankind, *Egisthus*,
 Presume to judge. Truth, wisdom, courage, justice,
 Benefi-

Beneficence, and for the public good
 A constant tenor of well-laid designs,
 Must still be awful in the worst of times,
 Be amiable, dear; while worth, at last
 Will light up worth, and virtue kindle virtue.
 You was however eas'd of half the toil,
 By him I left to counsel *Clytemnestra*,
 By *Melisander*.

EGISTHUS.

Would to heaven I had!

AGAMEMNON.

You much amaze me.—Is not *Melisander*
 Wife, just and faithful?

EGISTHUS.

Sir, I must confess

He wore a specious mask——

AGAMEMNON.

Beware, *Egisthus*;

I know his steadfast worth, and will not bear
 The farthest hint that stains the man I love.

EGISTHUS.

Then urg'd by truth and in my own defence,
 I boldly will assert him, *Agamemnon*,
 To be more apt to trouble and embroil,
 Than serve a state. A certain stubborn virtue,
 I would say affectation of blunt virtue,
 Beneath whose outside froth, fermenting lay
 Pride, envy, faction, turbulence of soul,
 And democratic views, in some sort made him

A secret

A secret traitor, equally unfit
Or to obey or rule. But that I check'd
His early treasons, here at your return,
You might have found your kingdom a republic.

AGAMEMNON.

O I shall lose all patience!—

(*Aside.*

You do well,

To give your accusation open speech.
Meantime, remember you must fully prove it,
You must!—And he who *Melissander* proves
The wretch you have describ'd, proves man is vain,
And saps the broad foundations of all trust.
I know he would not patiently look on,
And suffer ill designs to gather strength,
Awaiting gentle seasons; yes, I know
He had a troublesome old-fashion'd way
Of shocking courtly ears with horrid truth.
He was no civil ruffian: none of those,
Who lye with twisted looks, betray with shrugs—
I wax too warm—But he was none of those,
Is none of those dust-licking, reptile, close,
Insinuating, speckled, smooth court-serpents,
That make it so unsafe, chiefly for kings,
To walk this weedy world—Pardon my heat—
I wander from the purpose—You *Egisthus*,
Must prove your charge, to *Melissander's* face
Must prove it.

EGISTHUS.

Surely—Since the princely faith
Of your own blood you doubt—

AGAMEMNON.

Friendship and truth
Are more a-kin to me than blood.

EGISTHUS.

You shall,
You shall have proof; but to his face you cannot.

AGAMEMNON.

But to his face I will!—I cannot! why?

EGISTHUS.

He wanders far from hence, I know not where,
For when I found him an undoubted traitor,
Tho' he the heaviest punishment deserv'd;
Yet in regard to that esteem, which, once,
You deign'd to bear him, banishment alone
Was all I did inflict.

AGAMEMNON:

I thank you, sir —
O you are wondrous good!—But tell me, how,
How durst you meddle in the sphere assign'd
To *Clytemnestra*? He was left to her;
To be her counsellor I left my friend,
Left *Melisander*; left a man, whom long,
Whom well I knew; perhaps, to check you, left him;
And you pretend, you!—But I will be calm —
These passions in a king to his inferiors,
Who cannot answer equal, are not comely.
Forgive my transport — A more quiet hour
Shall sift this matter to the bottom, shall
Do *Melisander* or *Egisthus* justice.

S C E N E

S C E N E VI.

EGISTHUS.

Now go thy way, weak open-hearted man,
 Thus to declare the ruin thou intendest.
 Go, rate thy *Trojan* slaves; and elsewhere practise
 This insolence of camps. Tame, as I seem,
 Submissive, mild, and patient of thy threats;
 Yet, ere to-morrow's sun beholds *Mycenæ*,
 My sure-aim'd blow shall pierce thy swelling heart,
 And cool this tyrant fever in thy veins.
 Were not our blood, our kindred blood at variance,
 And therefore burning with immortal hate;
 Had not thy father *Atreus*, at a banquet,
 A dreadful banquet! from whose sight the sun
 Turn'd back eclips'd, serv'd—Monstrous!—up to mine,
 To his own brother, to the pale *Thyestes*,
 His murder'd sons: didst thou not wear a crown
 Then by thy father ravish'd from our line,
Mycenæ's crown, which he unjustly seiz'd,
 And added to his own, to that of *Argos*:
 Had I not stain'd thy bed with *Clytemnestra*:
 Tho' safety did not urge, and self-defence:
 Yet this vile treatment, treatment fit for slaves;
 Thanks to thy fury! this has fix'd thy doom.
 Some foolish scruples, that still hung about me,
 Are by this friendly tempest blown away.—

But *Clytemnestra* comes. How shall I calm
 Her troubled mind? How bring her to my purpose?

H 2

S C E N E

S C E N E VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Here let me kneel, *Egisthus*, grasp thy knees ;
 Here let me grow till my request be granted.
 Now is the very crisis of my fate.

EGISTHUS.

What sight is this I see ? Rise, *Clytemnestra* !
 Thou fairest, most majestic of thy sex !
 It misbecomes thee much this suppliant posture.
 O there is nothing, nothing, sure, which you
 Need stoop to ask ! speak, and command it, madam !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then let us henceforth be, as if this love
 Had never been betwixt us.

EGISTHUS.

Cease to love thee !

What wild demand ! Impossible !—Even now,
 Endear'd by danger, by distress endear'd,
 I for thee feel a fonder pang, than e'er
 I felt before.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No ! these deluding words
 Can charm no longer ; their enchantment flies ;
 And in my breast the guilty passions jar

Unkind,

Unkind, unjoyous, unharmonious all.
 Ah me! from real happiness we stray,
 By vice bewilder'd; vice, which always leads,
 However fair at first, to wilds of woe.

EGISTHUS.

Ah! *Clytemnestra*! didst thou love—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No more!

Seduce my soul no more! Here will I stop—
 Beyond this line 'tis misery, 'tis madness,
 The furies flash their torches, vultures tear,
 The mingled tortures of the damn'd await me.
 Oh! if your passion be not merely selfish,
 If the least tenderness for me you feel,
 Drive me no farther down the gulph of woe!
 To happiness I bid a last farewell;
 I ask not happiness: no, that I leave
 To innocence and virtue; peace, alone,
 Some poor remains of peace is all I ask,
 Not to be greatly wretched, plung'd in horrors!
 And yet, who knows, the heavenly spark, that sleeps
 Beneath these embers, yet may spread anew
 Its chearful lustre—All may yet be well—
 For *Agamemnon* was so kind, so gentle,
 With such a holy tender flame he burn'd,
 As might have kindled in a barbarous breast
 Humanity and virtue.

EGISTHUS.

All pretence.

H 3

I guess

I guess his aim ! I penetrate his purpose.
 On you he lavish'd fondness, while on me
 He lowr'd destruction. Doubtless, with his ear,
 Some villain has been busy ; and he means
 First to divide us, then with greater ease,
 To ruin both — And can you then be caught,
 Caught with the common prostituted speeches,
 That oft have sicken'd on the glowing lip
 Of many a *Trojan* slave ? *Chryseis* had them ;
Briseis too : and now *Cassandra*, she,
 Who, more like a triumphant queen than captive,
 Is every hour expected —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What *Cassandra* ?

EGISTHUS.

O it imports you little what *Cassandra* !
 Thus poorly tame you ne'er will want *Cassandras*.
 What is become of *Clytemnestra's* spirit,
 That she can thus forget her high descent,
 Forget her rank, her honour, nay forget
 Her injuries ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But what *Cassandra*, say ?

EGISTHUS.

Why *Priam's* daughter, the prophetic princess,
 The proud, the young, the beautiful *Cassandra* :
 So vain of heart, she dreamt *Apollo* lov'd her,
 And, on her plighted faith to crown his love
 Bestow'd the gift of prophecy ; the gift

In

In her possession, she deceiv'd the god ;
Whence he, provok'd, with this condition dash'd it,
Of never gaining credit. So the tale,
The fable runs—Yet, on my soul, I think,
Did she give out, she will be queen of *Argos*,
She were indeed a prophetess.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis well.

You mean it for an insult this, you do.
What else could tempt you to deride me, sir,
With such extravagance !

EGISTHUS.

Mistake me not,

I mean it, madam, for a serious truth,
I mean it for a certainty, if thus
You droop, unnerv'd with these dejecting fears.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Cassandra queen of *Argos* !

EGISTHUS.

Yes, of *Argos* ;

While *Clytemnestra* in a prison pines ;
Where she may weep, and moralize at leisure.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

By heavens ! she visits first her father's shade.

EGISTHUS.

There shone your native self. Let bright revenge,
I should say justice, dissipate these clouds,
These melancholy whims of ill-judg'd virtue,
And shew you burning with your former lustre.

H 4

Madam,

152 A G A M E M N O N.

Madam, our fates are blended: know, we stand
Or fall together. Shame, contempt, and ruin,
Or safety, love, and glory, is our choice.
And can we doubt a moment?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But *Egisthus*—

EGISTHUS.

I know the purpose of thy pleading eye.
Of that hereafter—We shall meet again—
My presence now is wanted in the city.
Fear nothing—Thou shalt know before we act.
Thou, for whose sake alone I act and live!

The End of the Second Act.

ACT

A C T III. S C E N E I.

A R C A S, M E L I S A N D E R.

A R C A S.

A N D have I found my long-lost friend again?
My *Melisander*! But so chang'd your look,
So sickly'd with a kind of thoughtful sadness,
So sunk each feature, by seven drooping years
Spent in that desert isle, as baffled quite
My wandring recollection.

M E L I S A N D E R.

True, dear *Arcas*:

For what a helpless creature, by himself,
Is the proud lord of this inferior world,
Vain feeble man! the commoners of nature,
Each wing that flits along the spacious sky,
Is less dependant than their boasting master.

Hail social life! into thy pleasing bounds
Again I come, to pay the common stock
My share of service; and, in glad return,
'To taste thy comforts, thy protected joys.

H 5.

A R C A S.

ARCAS.

O greatly welcome ! you deserve them well,
 You well deserve the social life you polish.
 Still on my thought your strange delivery dwells.
 By *Agamemnon* left to aid the queen,
 With faithful counsel, while he warr'd at *Troy* ;
 And thus by *Agamemnon* to be fav'd,
 Returning from that conquest ! wondrous chance !
 Or rather wondrous conduct of the gods !
 By mortals, from their blindness, chance misnam'd.
 Mean time, instruct me, while the king reposes,
 How was you snatch'd away ? and how, so long,
 Could you this dreadful solitude support ?
 I burn to know the whole.

MELISANDER.

'Tis thus, my friend.
 While sunk in unsuspecting sleep I lay,
 Some midnight ruffians rush'd into my chamber,
 Sent by *Egisthus*, who my presence deem'd
 Obstructive (so I solve it) to his views ;
 Black views I fear, as you perhaps may know.
 Sudden they seiz'd, and muffled up in darkness,
 Strait bore me to the sea, whose instant prey
 I did conclude myself, when first, around
 The ship unmoor'd, I heard the chiding wave.
 But these fell tools of cruel power, it seems,
 Had orders in a desert isle to leave me ;
 There hopeless, helpless, comfortless, to prove
 The utmost gall and bitterness of death.

Thus

Thus malice often overshoots itself,
 And some unguarded accident betrays
 The man of blood.—Next night—a dreary night!
 Cast on the wildest of the *Cyclad isles*,
 Where never human foot had mark'd the shore,
 These ruffians left me—Yet believe me, *Arcas*,
 Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
 All ruffians as they were, I never heard
 A sound so dismal as their parting oars.—
 Then horrid silence follow'd, broke alone
 By the low murmurs of the restless deep,
 Mixt with the doubtful breeze, that now and then
 Sigh'd thro' the mournful woods. Beneath a shade
 I sat me down, more heavily oppress'd,
 More desolate at heart, than e'er I felt
 Before. When *Philomela*, o'er my head,
 Began to tune her melancholy strain,
 As piteous of my woes; till, by degrees,
 Composing sleep on wounded nature shed
 A kind but short relief. At early morn,
 Wak'd by the chaunt of birds, I look'd around
 For usual objects: Objects found I none,
 Except before me stretch'd the toiling main,
 And rocks and woods, in savage view, behind.
 Wrapt for a moment in amaz'd confusion,
 My thought turn'd giddy round; when, all at once,
 To memory full my dire condition rush'd.

ARCAS.

But of each comfort, each convenience void,

H 6

How

How could you life sustain ? how fence against
Inclement skies ?

MELISSANDER.

A mossy cave, that fac'd
The southern sea, and in whose deep recess
Boil'd up a crystal fountain, was my home.
Herbs were my food, those blessed stores of health
Only when winter, from my daily search,
Withdrew my verdant meal, I was oblig'd
In faithless snares to seize, which truly griev'd me,
My sylvan friends ; that ne'er till then had known,
And therefore dreaded less the tyrant man.

But these low hardships scarce deserve regard :
The pangs, that sharpest stung, were in my mind ;
There desolation reign'd ; and there, cut off
From social life, I felt a constant death.
And yet these pangs at last forgot to throb :
What cannot lenient gentle time perform ?
I eat my lonely meal without a tear ;
Nor sigh'd to see the dreadful night descend.
In my own breast, a world within my self,
In streams, in groves, in sunny hill and shade ;
In all that blooms with vegetable life,
Or joys with kindred animal sensation ;
In the full-peopled round of azure heaven ;
Whene'er I, studious, look'd, I found companions.
But, chief, the muses lent their softning aid.
At their enchanting voice my sorrows fled,
Or learn'd to please ; while, thro' my troubled heart,
They

They breath'd the soul of harmony anew.
 Thus of the great community of nature
 A denizen I liv'd; and oft, in hymns,
 And rapturous thought, even with the gods convers'd,
 That not disdain sometimes the walks of man.

So pass'd the time, when, lo! within my call,
 Arriv'd the ship, which hope had often promis'd—
 The ship!—O it surpass'd my fondest dream,
 E'er to imagine the gay ship that came!
 As on the deck I *Agamemnon* saw,
 All glorious with the spoils of conquer'd *Troy*;
 Ye gods! what transport, what amazement seiz'd me!
 What adoration of your wondrous ways!
 Expressions sink beneath them.

ARCAS.

Sweet reward
 Of manly patience! that, to fortune still
 Superior, scorns despair.

MELISANDER.

This theme, my friend,
 Will better suit a leisure hour; but now
 The high concerns of life demand our care.
 I have already to the king imparted
 Suspicions of *Egisthus*, and remain
 In this disguise, not to alarm his guilt,
 Till it more full appear, and proper steps
 To punish his misgovernment be taken.
 If he has ill designs, you, *Arcas*, you
 Must, while you seem'd regardless, have discern'd them.
 Your

Your calm but keen inspection, not disturb'd
 By the vain flutter of ill-tim'd discourse,
 Must reach the very bottom of his purpose.
 In you the king confides, of you demands,
 As of his best-lov'd subject in *Mycenæ*,
 The truth:

ARCAS.

O, I have precious truths in store!
 And that best treasure will unlock before him.
 Long has my silent observation trac'd
Egisthus, thro' the doubling maze of treason;
 But now his ill designs are too too plain,
 To all *Mycenæ* plain; and who indeed,
 Who can have good ones, that corrupts a people?

It was, however, hard, a bitter task!
 To wink at publick villainy; to wipe
 Each honest passion from my livid face,
 To bind my hands, and seal my quivering lips,
 While my heart burn'd with rage, and treasur'd up
 A storm of indignation —

MELISANDER.

Give it way!

O 'tis a glorious luxury! Opprest,
 For years, beneath a load of wicked power,
 To heave it off indignant, and assert
 The dear dear freedom of a virtuous mind.
 Curse on the coward or perfidious tongue,
 That dares not, even to kings, avow the truth!
 Let traitors wrap them in delusive incense,

On

On flattery flattery heap, on falshood falshood :
 Truth is the living liberal breath of heaven ;
 That sweeps these fogs away, with all their vermin.
 And, on my soul, I think that *Agamemnon*
 Deserves some touch of blame. To put the power,
 The power of blessing or oppressing *millions*,
 Of doing or great good or equal mischief,
 Even into doubtful hands, is worse than careless.
 Ye gods, avert the miseries that hence
 On him and on his family may fall !
 But, see, the king

SCENE II.

AGAMEMNON, MELISANDER, ARCAS.

AGAMEMNON.

Nay, *Arcas* to my bosom, (*Arcas kneeling.*)
 Come, let me proudly take a faithful heart !

ARCAS.

Thrice welcome, sir, to *Argos* and *Mycenæ* !
 To virtue welcome !

AGAMEMNON.

In my own dominions
 I am a stranger, *Arcas*. Ten full years,
 Or even one day, is absence for a king,
 Without some mighty reason, much too long.
 For me a just and memorable war,
 Whose actions future times perhaps may sing,

My own, my brother's, and my people's honour,
 With that of common *Greece*, must plead my pardon.
 Now shall my cares attend the works of peace :
 Calm deeds that glare not on the vulgar eye ;
 And yet it equal courage oft demands,
 To quell injustice, riot, factious rage,
 Dark-working blind cabal and bold disorder,
 As to confront the rigid face of war.
 Then tell me, *Arcas*, for, till self-inform'd,
 I mean to see with your discerning eyes,
 And sure I am they never will mislead me.
 Have I much subject for this peaceful courage ?
 This fortitude of state ?

ARCAS.

Too much my lord.

Would to the gods, our virtues, here at home,
 Could answer your heroic deeds abroad !
 You, doubtless from the rugged school of war,
 Have brought sound manly hearts, and generous spirits :
 While we, alas ! we rot in weedy peace,
 In slothful riot, luxury, profusion,
 And every meanness to repair that waste—
 I see the noble blood, indignant, mount,
 At this relation to my sovereign's cheek :
 But as affairs now press, I were a traitor,
 If with a sparing tongue I spoke the truth.

AGAMEMNON.

Immortal gods ! have I, this ten long years,
 Sustain'd a war at *Troy* ; fill'd every day

With

With cares incessant, councils, dangers, toils,
To cherish villains in licentious ease?
Have I thus squander'd vile, on *Phrygian* plains,
The bravest blood of *Greece* to shelter such;
And to assert their honour who have none?
But what can this perfidious, this *Egisthus*,
What can he, say, by such loose rule propose?
Is it his native bent? Or does he push
Some dark design, by these detested means?

ARCAS.

There is no vice a stranger to his heart,
Conceal'd beneath refin'd dissimulation;
Dissimulation, that on you yourself
Impos'd. Meantime, sir, his outrageous views
Invade the throne of *Argos* and *Mycenæ*.

AGAMEMNON.

Said you the throne of *Argos* and *Mycenæ*?
Already have I lost my noblest throne,
If he has robb'd me of my people's virtue;
'Tis but vain pomp, a tyrant's toy, the other.
And dares he bear a giddy look so high,
As to my throne? The villain! sure he dares not.

ARCAS.

Nay, more, my lord—He scales the dazzling height,
And almost grasps with impious hands your sceptre,

AGAMEMNON.

To touch it is perdition!—What! *Egisthus*!
Egisthus seize my throne!

ARCAS.

ARCAS.

So means the traitor.

AGAMEMNON.

That creature of my power! that insect! rais'd
 By the warm beams of my mistaken bounty!
 Whom, when my father's vengeance raz'd his race,
 I sav'd, train'd up, with favours, honours heap'd;
 And trusted in his hands at last a jewel,
 Too precious for the faithless heart of man—

O gross gross blindness!—Half my kingly pow'r!

Ay, there breaks out his father's treacherous blood!
 There, there, too late, I find the base *Thyestes*!
 Forgive me, *Atreus*! Oh my royal father!
 Forgive my trusting thus the seed of him,
 Of an abhor'd, an execrable brother,
 Who even profan'd thy bed—But, ere yon orb
 Shall from the purpled ocean rise again,
 Oh injur'd *Atreus*! by thy sacred shade
 I swear, to make for this a full atonement,

Is then this people, *Arcas*, grown so vile,
 So very vile, that he dares entertain
 The smallest hope to rival me in empire?
 I like not vaunting—But, ungrateful people!
 Can you prefer a nameless thing to me?
 Am I not rough with scars on your account?
 And for the careful love I always bore you,
 Your father nam'd? And yet prefer to me,
 One who ne'er saw the glorious front of war,
 For nothing famous but corrupting peace,

And.

And whose sole merit was my ill-judg'd favour
Can you?—away!—Dishonour stains the thought!
How should this be?

ARCAS.

Not many, fir, stand fix'd
On the deep principles of reason'd virtue,
Whom time nor steals, nor passion bears away.
Mankind, in general float along the stream
Of custom, good or bad; and oft the mind
To that familiar grows, by gradual use
And still-encroaching vice, whose first regard
Gave horror. Hence ten loosely-govern'd years
Have wrought such strange events, that you no more
Behold your antient *Argos* and *Mycenæ*.
These cities now with slaves and villains swarm.
At first *Egisthus*, popular and fair,
All smiles and softness, as if each man's friend,
By hidden ways proceeded, mining virtue:
He pride, he pomp, he luxury diffus'd;
He taught them wants, beyond their private means:
And strait, in bounty's pleasing chains involv'd,
They grew his slaves. Who cannot live on little,
Or as his various fortune shall permit,
Stands on the market ready to be sold.

AGAMEMNON.

O damn'd detested traffick!—But proceed.

ARCAS.

While the luxurious fever thus increas'd,
Still, in proportion as it gather'd rage,

He.

He lent it fewel ; and, more bold, disclos'd
 His noon-day treason. Murmurs went about,
 And spread at last into the common talk,
 That you was proud, severe, beneath the notion
 Of holding firm the helm of state, a tyrant ;
 That in vain wars, which nought imported them,
 You spent their treasure, shed their noblest blood ;
 And that, *Troy* conquer'd once, to her rich plains
 You meant from *Argos* to transplant your empire.

Mean time, in private, all, whom wild debauch
 Has set adrift from every human tie ;
 Whom riot, want, and conscious guilt inflame,
 Holding the gods and virtue in contempt,
 Amidst their bowls ; such are his bosom-friends :
 And join'd to them, a meaner ruffian band,
 Of villains bold in crimes, whose trade is murder,
 Hang in black clouds around him ; whence, I fear,
 A sudden tempest is prepar'd to burst.

This, sir, from duty and a faithful zeal,
 I plain unfold : nor on my word, alone,
 Believe these accusations ; clear as day,
 I for them will produce the strongest proof.

A G A M E M N O N.

I thank thee, *Arcas*. Truth, tho' sometimes clad
 In painful lustre, yet is always welcome,
 Dear as the light, that shews the lurking rock :
 'Tis the fair star that, ne'er into the main
 Descending leads us safe thro' stormy life —
 God ! how it tears me from each calmer thought !

To

To think this traitor, that this double traitor,
 This traitor to my self and to my people,
 Should by such sneaking, such unmanly ways,
 Thus filch away my crown!—
 Why stand I chafing here? One timely deed
 Is worth ten thousand words—Come then, my friends,
 Come and behold me seize amidst his guards,
 His coward guards—Guilt ever was a coward—
 This rival-king, and with him crown my triumph.
 Till then *Troy* smoaks in vain, and *Agamemnon*
 Cannot be said to conquer.

MELISANDER.

Sir, beware —

AGAMEMNON.

Of what beware? Where am I, *Melisander*?
 Am I not in *Mycenæ*? in my palace?
 Are not these crouds, that stream along the streets,
 My subjects all? Of what should I beware?
 Not seize a traitor in my own dominions?
 Yes I will seize him, *Melisander*,—will!

MELISANDER.

What grace to kings such generous ardour gives!
 But tho' brave deeds be warm at first conceiv'd,
 Let the best purpose cool, nor miss your blow.
 More firm and sure the hand of courage strikes,
 When it obeys the watchful eye of caution.
 You hear from *Arcas*, sir, what ruffian bands,
 What secret deaths, what daggers lurk around him:
 Be cautious then; for virtue's, glory's sake!

And,

166 A G A M E M N O N.

And, when you strike, strike home.

AGAMEMNON.

O for those *Greeks*!

That this rude day are tossing on the seas;
Those hardy *Greeks*, whom ten years war has steel'd;
With toils, with dangers, and with death familiar:
Then should you see what chaff before the wind
Are these weak sons of soft enfeebling peace,
These wretches, only bold where unresisted.

MELISANDER.

But since, my lord, you cannot now exert
This nobler force, let prudence take its place.
Have patience, only, till you safely can,
And surely, seize him.

AGAMEMNON.

Well, till then I will.

And, tho' not made of patient mold, in this
I will have patience, will, some tedious hours,
Repress my vengeance ————— (*pausing*)

Yes, I like the thought —

He may be seiz'd this evening at the banquet,
Be there surpriz'd with ease—and shall!—
For by th' eternal gods that rule mankind!
The sleep of death alone shall seal these eyes,
While such a wretch holds power in my dominions.

Oh *Clytemnestra*! to the public, now,
Succeeds the private pang—At thought of thee,
New rage, new vengeance shake my inmost soul!
Was my belov'd, my queen, my *Clytemnestra*,

So

So long abandon'd in a villain's power,
 Who knows, it seems, no limits, owns no laws,
 Save those one vice imposes on another?
 And now the secret cause, I fear, is plain,
 Of that unusual damp, that strange dejection,
 Which clouded her at meeting. Still the more
 I pour'd my fondness, still the more distress'd
 She seem'd; and, turning from my tender gaze,
 The copious shower stole down her troubled cheek;
 As if she pity'd those my blind endearments,
 And in her breast some horrid secret swell'd—
 Should it be so—Confusion!—Can I stoop
 Even to suppose it!—How from slight mistakes
 Great evils spring! But the most fruitful source
 Of every evil—O that I, in thunder,
 Could sound it o'er the listning earth to kings—
 Is delegating power to wicked hands.

MELISANDER.

My lord, let no suspicions of the queen
 E'er taint your bosom: if I judge aright—

A G A M E M N O N.

No, *Melisander*, no; I am not jealous;
 In me that passion and contempt were one;
 No, 'tis her situation gives me horror,
 Her dreadful situation!—But of this
 Enough—Then tell me *Arcas*, tell me truly;
 Are there a few, say, do there yet remain
 A faithful few! to save the sinking state?
 Can you, ere night, collect an honest band,

A band of such as worthy are to rescue
 Their king and country from impending fate ?
 Ah ! little thought I, that amidst my subjects,
 Embosom'd sweet in peace, I, like a tyrant,
 Should e'er have needed guards.

ARCAS.

Yes, sir, I know
 A band of generous youths, whom native virtue,
 Unbroken yet by avarice or profusion,
 Fits for our purpose : These I can collect—

AGAMEMNON.

About it quickly, *Arcas* ; lose no time :
 Go, bring me to the banquet those brave youths :
 I long for their acquaintance. Till that hour,
 Domestic cares and joys demand my presence :
 The father's heart now bears me to my children.
 Farewell ! My all depends upon your conduct.

The End of the Third Act.

A C T

ACT IV. SCENE I.

AGAMEMNON, MELISANDER.

AGAMEMNON.

Domestic pleasures spread their charms in vain —
O for the hour of vengeance! I, till then,
But stalk about, the shadow of a king.
Heard you from *Arcas* aught?

MELISANDER.

Be patient, sir.

As yet the time permits not his return.

Arcas is zealous, ardent in your service,

And will not fail his duty.

Enter an officer belonging to the court.

OFFICER.

Sir, *Cassandra*

Is just arriv'd.

AGAMEMNON.

Conduct the princess hither.

This *Priam's* fairest daughter, *Melisander*,

Is a young princess of engaging beauty,

Rais'd by distress, of noble sense and spirit;

But, by poetic visions led astray,
 She dreamt *Apollo* lov'd her, and the gift
 Of prophecy bestow'd, to gain her promise :
 The gift once her's, the chastly-faithless maid
 Deceiv'd the god ; who therefore, in revenge,
 Since he could not recall it, made it useless,
 For ever doom'd to meet with disregard.
 E'er-since the lovely visionary raves
 With dignity ; foretels the fate of nations ;
 And, judging of the future from the past
 Has oft been wondrous happy in her guesses.
 Some strange, some recent instances of this,
 Confirm her in her venerable madness.

MELISANDER.

Be not too rash in judging, *Agamemnon* ;
 For we, blind mortals, but a little know
 Of boundless nature—Hark ! the princess comes :
 I hear her voice, I hear the voice of sorrow.

SCENE II.

AGAMEMNON, MELISANDER, CASSANDRA *attended*
by Trojan captives.

CASSANDRA, *entering.*

O hostile roofs ! O *Ilium*, O my country !

ACA-

AGAMEMNON.

I cannot blame your grief, unhappy princess!
But, if it can relieve you, here be sure
Of an asylum, safe as *Priam's* palace.

CASSANDRA.

O sweet abode! O palace of my fathers!
My bleeding heart melts while I think of thee;
Think of the days of innocence and joy,
That shone upon me there. How chang'd art thou!
Ah! what a scene, when I beheld thee last!
Rage, blood, and flames, and shrieks of murder round me!
The sword of *Pyrrhus*, and a feeble father!
Where was you *Hector* then? Where all his sons?
O *Priam's* numerous race! what are you now
Become? Ah me! the desolating gods
Have laid their hands, their iron hands, upon us.

AGAMEMNON.

From past misfortunes, princess, turn your eye—

CASSANDRA.

'Tis true, the future may full well suffice.
Th' avenging sisters trace my footsteps still,
The hunters still pursue the trembling doe.
Where am I?—Gods!—Black heavy drops of blood
Run down the guilty walls—With the dun shades
Of night ascending, lo! successive troops
Of *Trojan* ghosts are flocking to the banquet:
Permitted by th' infernal gods, they come,
To feast them with the horrors of this night,
To snuff the blood of victims—Ha! the car,

The gay triumphal car, is turn'd, at once,
 Into a mournful bier, that nods along,
 Solemn and slow—Yes, *Troy* shall be aveng'd:
 I shall the vengeance see; and yet not see
 Thy light, returning *Phæbus*.

AGAMEMNON.

Fair *Cassandra*,
 Indulge no more these melancholy views,
 These visions form'd by gloomy-minded grief.
 We will each art, each tender art employ,
 To sooth your sorrows, to restore your peace.
 You come not to the proud unfeeling race
 Of yesterday: we know the turns of fortune;
 Have drunk the cup, the wholesome cup of sufferings,
 That not inflames but moderates the mind.
 Then fear not, princess; let me call you daughter!
 Your treatment shall be such as well becomes
 The dignity of woe, becomes the great,
 The fair unhappy. Nought shall touch your honour.
 I know, I feel your beauty: but here dwell
 The gods of hospitality and faith;
 The hymeneal powers are honour'd here.
 Yes, I will shield thee, equal with *Electra*,
 With my lov'd daughter in thy friendship blest.

CASSANDRA.

In spite of swelling tears that choak the way,
 Of bitter tears by big remembrance shed,
 I own thy goodness, thank thee, *Agamemnon*.
 Mean time, in vain, are all thy generous cares,

On

On my account. The gods of death will, soon,
 Extend o'er me their all-protecting wing.
 I shall not long, I shall not want protection:
 But, who, devoted prince, will give it thee?
 Even while we talk the secret wheels are turning,
 That lift the vile, and lay the mighty low.
 I pity thee, the house of *Pelops* pity:
 Forgive me, *Troy*: I pity thy destroyers.

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

A messenger from *Arcas*, Sir—

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis well.

To my apartment lead him—you mean while,

[To Melisander.]

Attend the princess; grace her with such honours,
 As suits her to receive, and me to give.

S C E N E III.

CASSANDRA, CHORUS of Trojan Captives, ME-
 LISANDER.

MELISANDER.

Fair princess, stop these tears. Exert that best,
 That noblest virtue, which can master fortune,
 An equal mind.

CASSANDRA.

Not for my self I weep!—

174 A G A M E M N O N.

But, oh my dear companions! How for you
My bosom yearns!

CHORUS.

We have together liv'd!
Together let us die!

CASSANDRA.

Together liv'd!
At this ten thousand images awake,
Ten thousand little tenderesses throb.

CHORUS.

O days of youth! O careless days! Untaught-
To weep, if love shed not the pleasing tear.

CASSANDRA.

O woods! O fountains! O delightful meads!
That lent us flowers, the prime of blooming *May*,
To deck our tresses.

CHORUS.

O the yellow banks
Of fair *Scamander*! in whose silver stream,
We us'd to bathe, beneath the secret shade.

CASSANDRA.

O chearful *Ida*'s airy summits! where
The gods delight to dwell.

CHORUS.

O silent *Troy*!
Whose streets have often echo'd with our song.

CASSANDRA.

O the lost labours of a ruin'd people!
O country! freedom! friends! relations! All,

That

That gives or taste or dignity to life,
All, all is gone, beyond recovery gone!

CHORUS.

Then let us die!

CASSANDRA.

For me, the hunted hart
More fervent pants not for the cooling stream,
Than I to wrap me in the quiet shades
Of death. But, ah! my helpless friends, for you
I feel it's keenest anguish.

CHORUS.

Not for us,
Feel not for us. What comfort have we left?
What hope, what wish in life?—One healing pang,
And then we weep no more.

CASSANDRA.

Refreshing thought!
And then from bondage, pain, from every ill,
For ever free, we meet our friends again;
Our parents, brothers, sisters, lovers meet.

CHORUS.

Then let us die! and sudden be the blow!

CASSANDRA.

The gods assent.—Behold the happy shore!
But, ah! there lies a stormy sea betwixt!

MELISANDER.

So sings the plaining nightingale her woes.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, far unlike the nightingale!—She sings,

Unceasing, thro' the balmy nights of *May* ;
She sings from love and joy, while we, alas !——

MELISANDER.

Behold the queen.—Deep-wrap'd in thought she seems.—

CASSANDRA.

O direful musings !—Lead us from her presence.

SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Sweet peace of mind ! whence pleasure borrows taste,
Daughter of virtue ! whither art thou fled ?
To what calm cottage, to what blameless shade,
Far from these guilty walls ? O walls ! O race !
To horrors doom'd !—Before me gathers fast
A deepning gloom, with unknown terrors big.—
Not quite unknown.—Gods ! what a dreadful hint
Flash'd from *Egisthus*, when I saw him last !
And to what desperate actions cannot safety,
Ambition, love and vengeance drive the soul !—
Distraction lies that way—yet, how escape ?
Shame urges on behind, unpitying shame,
'That worst of furies, whose fell aspect frights
Each tender feeling from the human breast.
Goodness itself even turns in me to gall,
And only serves to heighten my despair.
How kind was *Agamemnon* ! generous ! fond !
How more than usual mild ! As if, on purpose,
To

To give these tortures their severest sting.
 Happy! compar'd to this tormented state,
 Where honour only lives with inward lash,
 To punish guilt, happy the harden'd wretch,
 Who feels no conscience, and who fears no crime!—
 Oh horrid! horrid! Oh flagitious thought!
 How is it with the mind that can endure
 A thought so dire!—My sole remaining hope
 Is death, kind death, that amiable sleep,
 Which wakes no more,—at least to mortal care—
 But then the dark Hereafter that may come.—
 There is no anchor that against this storm,
 This mighty sea of doubts and fears, can hold.
 Hopeless, I drive.—One thought destroys another.—
 This stranger too!—Should it be *Melisander*—
 Is there a fear, however idle, wild,
 And even almost impossible, which guilt,
 The feeble-hearted guilt not entertains?—
 I order'd his attendance.—See, he comes.

S C E N E V.

CLYTEMNESTRA, MELISANDER.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stranger, are you not he, whom *Agamemnon*,
 By an amazing chance, in his return,
 Sav'd from a desert isle?

MELISANDER.

Madam, the same.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I much admire your fortunate deliverance,
And wish to hear your story : why there left,
And how sustain'd. Indulge me with it, stranger.

MELISANDER.

Madam, I come this moment from the king,
Charg'd with a matter which requires dispatch :
But, that transacted once, without delay,
I will attend your orders.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then, it seems,

You are not quite a stranger in *Mycenæ*.

What is your country ?

MELISANDER.

Greece.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What part of *Greece* ?

MELISANDER.

At *Athens* I was born.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But in *Mycenæ*,

Have you not in *Mycenæ* been before ?

MELISANDER.

There are not, madam, many parts of *Greece*
To me unknown.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why thus avoid my question ?—

Have

Have you been here before ?

MELISANDER.

Madam, I have.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Here in this palace ? — Ha ! why stand you silent ?

You keep your eyes unmov'd upon the ground.

What should this mean ? Beneath that rough disguise

There lurks, methinks, a form, which somewhere I

Have seen.

MELISANDER.

The dream of fancy, that the more

It is indulg'd, perplexes still the more.

I tarry here too long ; the king's commands

Admit of no delay.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis so ! 'tis so !

Air, features, manner, voice, this study'd haste,

The shifts of one unpractis'd in deceit,

All all conspire—One image wakes another,

And thick they flash upon me !

MELISANDER.

You grow pale,

You tremble, madam ; that mistake, I find,

Concerning me turns wilder and disturbs you.

Let me retire—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A moment—stay—

MELISANDER.

In vain,

I 6

I find

I find it is in vain to wrap me longer
In these evasions.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Melissander!

MELISANDER.

Madam—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And can it be? Behold I then the man,
Whom I so long have number'd with the dead?
Almighty gods! Behold I *Melissander*?
But, ah! how chang'd! how darken'd with suspicion?
Yes I am deem'd the author of his woes.

MELISANDER.

Madam, forgive—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why else from me conceal
Your wish'd return—I plainly am distrust'd—
By *Agamemnon* too—It was unkind,
Unjust, unfriendly, shocks me, *Melissander*.

MELISANDER.

Indeed you wrong me, madam, wrong me much,
To judge me apt or to conceive or spread
Distrust. I would have perish'd by my self,
Unknowr, unwept, in helpless solitude,
Rather than here return to this full world,
To set my mistress and her lord at variance.
O think me not a busy peace-destroyer!
Accurs'd is the wretch, to social life
The most inhuman foe, who in the nice,

The

The tender scenes of life, dares rashly meddle,
And sow division between friends and lovers.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The generous heart is ever slow to blame.
But, *Melisander*, not to me were owing,
Not in the least to me, those cruel woes,
This worse than death, which you so long have suffer'd.
Instead of that, your fate, how, whither gone,
If carry'd off, or secretly destroy'd,
Was all a mournful mystery to me,
Dark as the night on which you disappear'd.
Did you but know, here in my secret soul,
What undissembled pangs your absence rouz'd,
What I have felt for you, and for my self,
In losing such a wise and faithful friend;
Knew you but these, O knew you, *Melisander*,
How your disaster has been truly mine,
You never could suspect me.

MELISANDER.

Witness heav'n!

I never did—Your heart I know disdains,
A thought that looks like cruelty or fraud.
From the first moment that his ruffians seiz'd me,
I had no doubt, I knew it was *Egisthus*.
Some time before I mark'd the rising storm,
And meant to warn you, but it sudden burst,
And bore me far away, far from all means,
Even from all hope of lending you assistance.

Ay!

182 AGAMEMNON.

Ay ! there I suffer'd most. My fears for you,
At once by guile and violence beset,
Took off the point of my own proper woes.
But when your awful virtues struck my thought,
Your wisdom, spirit, resolution, truth;
That dread effulgence of the spotless soul,
Which smites the hardest villain into shame ;
My fears appear'd impertinent and vain.
Yet doubtless, madam, you have had occasion
For a firm ruling hand and watchful eye,
For every virtue ; and I truly joy,
That *Agamemnon* finds at his return
Egisthus by your conduct thus restrain'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

By heavens ! he tries me.— O suspicious guilt !

(*Aside.*)

Your words are friendly, but your deeds are doubtful.
No, *Melisander*, friendship with distrust
Can never dwell. And that I am distrusted
To me is certain—In a matter too,
That much concern'd my peace, concern'd my honour.
For did you even ascribe your woes to me,
You could not manage with more distant caution.

MELISANDER.

Whence is it that the noble *Clytemnestra*,
Who us'd to shine in a superior sphere
Of fair serenity and candid peace,
Should to these doubts descend, these dark suspicions?

For me, I here attest the gods, my soul
 Ne'er knew a thought, that swell'd not with esteem,
 With love, and veneration of your virtues.
 And for the king, no young enraptur'd lover,
 In all the first effusions of his soul,
 New to the mighty charm; no friend, who meets,
 After long years of dark and silent absence,
 His happy friend again, feels livelier joy,
 Than *Agamemnon* feels, while his glad tongue
 Runs out in endless praise of *Clytemnestra*—
 But I must wait his orders.—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do your duty.
 I too must go, must to *Egeus* strait. [Aside.
 Impart this dreadful news.

SCENE VI.

MELISANDER, alone.

She went abruptly—
 And as we talk'd, methought, strange passions shook
 Her inward frame, and darken'd every feature.

Behold the black, the guilt-concealing night
 Fast closes round. Wide, thro' this ample palace,

The

The lamps begin to shine. The tempest falls ;
 The weary winds sink, breathless. But, who knows
 What fiercer tempest yet may shake this night.
 Soul-cheering *Phœbus*, with thy sacred beams
 O quickly come, and chase these fullen shadows.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT

ACT V. SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS.

EGISTHUS.

A H *Clytemnestra* ! what a change is here !
And must I then thus steal an interview ?
Are we alone ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You fright me with that question :
You look astonish'd.

EGISTHUS.

On the brink of ruin
We, tottering, stand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

That is no news to me.

EGISTHUS.

But —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What ?

EGISTHUS.

We are discover'd.

CLY-

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ha ! discover'd !

EGISTHUS.

Yes certainly discover'd. *Arcas* now,
By *Agamemnon's* orders, in the city
Collects a band, to seize me at the banquet,
A short hour hence. And my accusers, madam,
You may be well assur'd are not your friends.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis plain ! 'tis plain !—The parting fogs disperse :
And now the doubtful scene stands all reveal'd—
Who could have thought they should dissemble thus ?
But I can tell you more.

EGISTHUS.

What, madam ? speak
For danger presses on us.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Saw you him,
This seeming stranger, fav'd by *Agamemnon*?

EGISTHUS.

Arcas and he to-day, my friends inform me,
Were busy with the king ; and doubtless, then,
It was concerted that I should be seiz'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah ! did you know, *Egisthus*, who he is ?—

EGISTHUS.

Who ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Melifander.

EGISTHUS.

EGISTHUS.

Gods ! and does he live ?
For my confusion sav'd ! O gross, gross folly !
To do an action of that kind by halves.
Had he been silent dust—To please you, madam,
From a false tenderness for you, he lives—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A mighty merit ! glorious boast indeed !
Hear him, ye gracious gentle powers of love !
From tenderness for me, he did not murder
A worthy blameless man, who never hurt him ;
He murder'd not my friend, my faithful friend.
Ah ! 'tis such tenderness, that makes me wretched ;
Such tenderness, that still in blacker guilt,
In the last depth of misery will plunge me.

EGISTHUS.

It is not, madam, now a time for this.
Think of our situation : close beset
By all those ills which mortals most abhor,
Whom have we to confide in but each other ?
And this sad meeting is perhaps our last.
Concord alone, and vigorous measures, can
Prevent our ruin—But, from *Melifander*,
What did you learn ? Are you your self suspected ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I cannot find I am :—And yet I must.

EGISTHUS.

But, as for me, my ruin is no secret.

Cly.

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CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis true, some dark attempt goes on against you.

EGISTHUS.

Then have I rightly done.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What have you done?

EGISTHUS.

What prudence, justice, love and vengeance, all
Demand —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Immortal powers ! you have not ?—

EGISTHUS.

No :

But must, and will — What else can you propose ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, any thing besides ! immediate flight,
Eternal absence, death !—

EGISTHUS.

Let others die !

Let the proud, faithless, false, injurious tyrant ;
The hero glorious in his daughter's murder ;
The scourge of Greece, who has, from wild ambition,
Shed so much blood — let *Agamemnon* die !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh heavens and earth ! you shock me to distraction !

I have, *Egisthus*, hitherto avoided
This dreadful point, still hoping you might drop
Your horrid resolution : now I tell you,
Before the listening gods, I plainly tell you,

That

That *Agamemnon* shall not fall unwarn'd :
 You shall not rise by me into his throne :
 I will not be the tool of your ambition ;
 Will not be wretched, infamous for ever,
 The blush of women, the disgrace of nature !
 That you may gain your execrable views,
 Mask'd under smooth pretences.—I am guilty ;
 Alas ! I am — But think not therefore, tyrant !
 To give me law. There are degrees in guilt ;
 And I have still my reason left, have left
 Some resolution, some remains of virtue :
 Yes, I dare die ; and who dares die, *Egisthus*,
 Needs not be driven to villainous extremes !
 Mark me, insulting man !—My certain cure
 Of every woe, my cordial draught is ready ;
 And if you do not promise me, here swear
 To drop your fell designs on *Agamemnon*,
 To quit this palace—You may still escape —
 And never see me more ; I go, I go,
 This moment to discover all and die !

EGISTHUS.
 What ! *Clytemnestra* !

CLYTEMNESTRA.
 Nothing shall dissuade me.
 I will not argue more—Say, only say,
 Must I betake me to this cruel refuge ?
 This dire necessity ?

EGISTHUS.
 Permit me, madam ;

Hear

Hear me but once, and then pursue your purpose.

Suppose us guilty, what you will ;—yet, madam,
Shall we acknowledge and proclaim that guilt ?

Shall we, by patient waiting for our doom,

By pitiful neglect of self-defence,

Unheard of meanness ! stamp it into shame ?

No ; let us wipe it out with bold success.

It is success that colours all in life :

Success makes fools admir'd, makes villains honest ;

All the proud virtue of this vaunting world

Fawns on success, and power, howe'er acquir'd.

If then, supposing guilt, it were a meanness

To stoop to shame, can words express the madness

Of stopping short, with infamy and ruin,

When justice, love, and vengeance, urge to glory ?

Instead of being deem'd a generous queen,

The brave avenger of her sex's honour,

Fam'd for her spirit, for her just resentment ;

Who greatly punish'd a perfidious husband,

A cruel tyrant ; one, who from his bed,

His throne, propos'd, with open shame, to turn her,

And to her place to take his country's foe,

To take a *Trojan* captive, proud *Cassandra* :

Instead of such renown, can *Clytemnestra*—

Forgive the doubt—Can she submit to pass,

Thro' future times, for an abandon'd woman ?

A feeble, spiritless, abandon'd woman !—

Nay, madam, hear the truth, what now I tell you

Must, in a little scanty hour, take place ;

In

In a few moments, you must be the first
Or last of women ; be the public scorn,
Or admiration of approving Greece —
You know you must ;—be *Agamemnon's* slave,
Cassandra's slave, or nobly punish both,
And reign with me in happiness and glory.

Consult your heart ; can you resolve on shame ?
On voluntary shame ? That only ill
The generous fear, which kills the soul it self.
Were those fair features, full of lovely grandeur,
Form'd for confusion ? That majestic front,
To be bow'd down with infamy and vileness ?
Ah ! can you bear contempt ? The venom'd tongue
Of those whom ruin pleases ? The keen sneer,
The lewd reproaches of the rascal herd ;
Who for the self-same actions, if successful,
Would be as grossly lavish in your praise ?—
To sum up all in one—Can you support
The scornful glances, the malignant joy,
Or more detested pity of a rival ?
Of a triumphant rival ?—No ; you cannot.
That conscious worth, which kindles in your eye,
Tells me you cannot.—

But in vain disputes
No more to squander these important moments ;
Know, that I have not, to the frail decision
Of wav'ring fear and female weakness left
Our freedom, safety, happiness and honour.
Even in your own despite you shall be sav'd.

And

And could you be so lost to reason, wild,
 To do what woman never did before,
 What shocks humanity, accuse yourself;
 You only court dishonour to no purpose:
 For *Agamemnon* now cannot escape;
 I am already master of this palace;
 All is prepar'd, my people all are fix'd,
 All properly dispos'd; and here I swear,
 By sacred justice, glory, love and vengeance!
 He dies!—dies in the bath, before the banquet!—
 And with him dies *Cassandra*, she, who dares,
 In her presumptuous thought, usurp thy honours.

She weeps!—O my ador'd! my *Clytemnestra*!
 Forgive this barbarous necessary truth!
 Did I not love thee, love thee more than empire,
 Than life and glory, would I thus disclose
 These dangerous secrets? Could I not have veil'd,
 And, with more certain caution, gain'd my purpose?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh that you had, *Egisthus*! then, alas!
 I should have fondly thought myself less guilty.

EGISTHUS.

I lose my self in softness, while the time,
 With danger big, demands intrepid deeds.
 Wipe off these tears—When next we meet again,
 All will be well.

SCENE

SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah ! when we meet again !—
 I stand, at last, convinc'd, and must dissemble—
 Yet how dissemble ? Painted, in my face,
 Are the full horrors of this bloody deed.—
 But who are these approaching ?—Ha !—*Cassandra* !
 How fair she seems ! how lovely !—hateful charms !
 That well may rival mine, decay'd, and sunk
 By guilt and sorrow—She possesses my bed !
 Possesses my scepter !—This restores my spirit ;—
 I am abus'd ! too patient !—Perish all !
 Perish my self, *Egisthus*, *Agamemnon* !
 So this proud rival, this *Cassandra* perish !

SCENE III.

CASSANDRA, Trojan captives, MELISANDER.

MELISANDER.

Daughters of *Ilium* ! By the king's command,
 I come to ask your presence at the banquet.
 Till then allow me to partake your woes :
 I have a reverence for them. I myself,
 Thanks to the gracious gods ! have known misfortune ;
 I am with grief acquainted ; therefore can

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For others feel. Sweet source of every virtue,
O sacred sorrow ! He who knows not thee,
Knows not the best emotions of the heart,
Those tender tears that humanize the soul,
The sigh that charms, the pang that gives delight ;
He dwells too near to cruelty and pride,
And is a novice in the school of virtue.

CASSANDRA.

We thank thee, stranger, for thy generous pity.
Heaven has, it seems, throughout diffus'd the good.
May the kind gods, the hospitable powers,
For this befriend thee ! Thou must wander still,
Wilt their protection want.—But *Agamemnon* !
Where is the king ?

MELISANDER.

He bathes him for the banquet,
The banquet earn'd by ten years war and toil.

CASSANDRA.

Short-sighted man ! to dream of festal joy,
When his next banquet is perhaps with *Pluto*.

He comes ! the god comes rushing on my soul !
O gently sooth me with the voice of music !
Assuage my pangs with harmony !—Methinks,
I hear *Apollo's* lyre.

MELISANDER.

Mysterious powers !

CASSANDRA.

'Tis gone—And now harsh discord takes its place :
Dire yellings now affright my trembling ear.

What means this uproar of the howling forest?
The lions and wolf, together leag'd,
Pursue the lion's life.—Behold! the snare,
Th' infernal snare is set, spread by the stream,
Where, unsuspecting harm, he bathes at noon.
Soon will these guiltless waters blush with blood.

MELISANDER.

There is a sort of gloomy light in this,
That flashes horror on me.

CASSANDRA.

A black swarm

Of fell ideas seize my fancy.—Hence!
O snatch me from this palace! shambles rather!
It smells of carnage; breathes a hideous steam,
As if from gaping sepulchres exhal'd.
And, lo! the spotless loves, the sports, the joys,
The weeping *Lares* fly: while in their place,
The vices all, the raging furies come;
And with them *Comus*, the flush'd god of banquets,
Besmear'd with gore—They sing the funeral hymn—
What do I see? What mean these mangled forms?
These pale, these nightly phantoms; such as rise,
To working fancy's eye, in troubled dreams?—
See! where they sit for ever at the gates,
Demanding vengeance—Vengeance is at hand—
Ha! 'tis the murder'd boys, whose limbs were, here,
Serv'd up to their own fire, to be devour'd!—

MELISANDER.

She wakes my dread—The story of *Thyestes*!

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CASSANDRA.

With this devoted race involv'd I fall :
Nor falls the slave alone—The master falls.
But man shall die for man, for woman woman :
Remember this.

MELISANDER.

The slave, the master fall !

CASSANDRA.

Ah bosom-traitress ! Ill-persuaded queen !
And canst thou then the barbarous secret keep ?—

MELISANDER.

What queen ? what secret ? Speak more plain, *Cassandra* !

CASSANDRA.

From guilt, in vain, to greater guilt you fly,
From crime to crime precipitated—No !
The wicked find no peace—Distraction waits thee !—
One effort more—Yes, save thy lord, and die—
That throw belong'd to virtue—Cannot then
The gentle powers prevail ?—A moment yet,
The doubtful balance yet allows a moment—
Down, down it goes, for vengeance and for *Troy* !
But ah ! such vengeance, as even foes themselves
Abhor to see !

MELISANDER.

She staggers all my reason.

Unveil these dreadful oracles—Perhaps—

CASSANDRA.

Yes, in a moment, they will be too plain.
The moment comes ! The furies lash it on !

Ha !

Ha! Now!

MELISANDER.

Unusual horror creeps—

CASSANDRA.

Alas!

Keep from the murderous sacrificer's hand,
O keep the victim bull! Lo! seiz'd, he spurns,
He foams in vain—Behold the lifted blow!
Behold the thirsty steel!—They strike him!—Hark!
What dismal echoes run from room to room!

MELISANDER.

I heard a distant noise!—

CASSANDRA.

*[The noise of Agamemnon's assassination,
heard indistinctly, and at a distance, be-
hind the scenes.]*

CASSANDRA.

Again!—They strive,
Th' assassins labour who shall wound him most.
'Tis done!—He falls!—

AGAMEMNON, *behind the scenes.*

[The noise heard distinctly, and near.]

Off! villains! cowards! off!—
By villains murder'd!—Oh!

MELISANDER.

Great gods! the king!—

S C E N E IV.

MELISANDER, CASSANDRA, Trojan captives,
ELECTRA, ORESTES.

ELECTRA.

Stop, generous stranger! *Agamemnon's* friend!

MELISANDER.

What would *Electra*? what with *Melisander*?

ELECTRA.

Heavens! *Melisander*!

MELISANDER.

To the king's assistance

I fly; detain me not.

ELECTRA.

He is no more!—

MELISANDER.

Ha! dead!

ELECTRA.

Yes, murder'd by *Egisthus*! dead!

Pierc'd with a thousand wounds! O horror! horror!—

We have not time for grief—*Orestes*—Quick!

Fly! save my brother!

ORESTES.

Leave my father!—No!

It is but once that I have ever seen him,

Shall I no more?

ELECTRA

ELECTRA.

But to revenge his death,
O fly, *Orestes*, for that glorious purpose!
Tremendous gods! Methinks, I see his ghost,
That beckons you away!

ORESTES.

I come! I come!

On *Melisander*—

ELECTRA.

Brother!

ORESTES.

Oh, my sister!

What will become of thee?

ELECTRA.

Good *Melisander*,

O guard my brother! save our only hope!—
I heard a noise—Farewell!

ORESTES, going.

Ah! poor *Electra*!

SCENE V.

ELECTRA, CASSANDRA, Trojan captives.

ELECTRA.

The murderers come! stain'd with my father's blood!
Hide me, *Cassandra*, hide me from a sight
I cannot bear, a scene to nature shocking!

S C E N E VI.

The back-scene opening discovers, at a distance, Agamemnon's body. Electra throws herself by it.

CASSANDRA, Trojan captives, EGISTHUS with some
of his party.

EGISTHUS.

Enough, my friends!—How low, how silent, now,
The mighty boaster lies!—Another blow
Crowns my revenge —

CASSANDRA.

It shall not, base assassin!
The gods are just; amidst the crimes of men,
Are firmly just, supremely wise and good:
The gods are here, in all their terrors present!
See where in dreadful majesty they sit!
And write thy doom in *Agamemnon's* blood!

EGISTHUS.

Think not to shake me with these gloomy fables:
This arm that has acquir'd, shall guard my power;
And since I now enjoy my long-wish'd vengeance,
All here is calm and chearful.

CASSANDRA.

The false boast
Of agonizing guilt! Thy soul, I see,
Beneath this harden'd pride, this brutal courage,

Boils

Boils with black torments, and with inward tempest.
I know whence breaks that gleam of joy athwart thee,
As lightning flashes o'er a troubled sky :
Thou dreamst the prince now falls beneath thy fury :
But hear and tremble — young *Orestes* lives !

EGISTHUS.

Hence with thy vain predictions, doating woman !—

S C E N E VII.

EGISTHUS, CASSANDRA, &c. *and to them assassins*
sent to murder ORESTES.

EGISTHUS.

Well, is *Orestes* dead ?

ASSASSIN.

Ah, sir ! escap'd—

When all was in confusion, here, and tumult.

EGISTHUS.

O nothing then is done !—Fly ! tardy villains !

Pursue him to the farthest verge of earth,—

No dark retreat, no country.—But here comes

Another storm. Distraction wings her pace.

K 5

S C E N E

SCENE VIII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS, CASSANDRA, &c.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Off! give me way! to desarts let me fly!

The wildest savage there! —

Why pierce me thus with looks? — In every eye

There is a dagger; chief in thine (to Egisthus) — Ha!
villain!

I know thee; know these eyes, where smiling love

To the red glarings of a fury's torch

Is now transform'd. — Yes, traitor! turn away:

But, ere you go, give me my peace again;

Give me my happy family around;

Give me my virtue, honour, nay my glory;

Or give me death, tho' death cannot relieve me. —

Are these the deeds of love? — I cannot step,

Unless I dip my shivering feet in blood.

Compar'd with this polluted, this dire palace,

The sepulchre is gay. — But whither fly? —

Ah! what avails it where the guilty fly,

Since from themselves they cannot! — Ha! behold!

The black abyfs discloses to my view;

And down I go, a dark, a deep descent! —

Hell from beneath is mov'd at my approach:

Its princes flock around. Behold, they say,

The greatly-wretched, greatly-wicked woman!

She

Her who preferr'd the villain to the hero !
 The *Trojan* shades, with sharp derision, thank me :
 The *Grecian* droop—Lo ! where he comes himself !
 See ! How in fallen majesty he stalks !—
 Oh look not on me with that silent scorn !
 I am too curs'd already !—

[*Faints into the arms of her attendants.*]

EGISTHUS.

Bear her hence :

And look she be attended well.—But hark !
 What new alarm ?

S C E N E IX.

EGISTHUS, CASSANDRA, &c. to them a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

As *Melisander*, sir,

Bore off *Orestes*, to th' assembled senate
 He show'd the prince, and rous'd them to revenge.
 'Tis nought but rage. The people, in a torrent,
 By *Arcas* headed, pour upon the palace.
 Besides, each moment, *Agamemnon's* troops—

EGISTHUS.

Quick ! summon here my friends—In *Io's* grove
 They ready wait. We this important day
 Will or with conquest crown, or bravely die.

CASSANDRA.

No, tyrant, no ! the gods refuse thee that :

Not like the brave, but like the trembling coward,
Th' assassinating coward, thou shalt die ;
There in that spot, where *Agamemnon* lies !

EGISTHUS.

Lead these ill-boding women to their fate ;
And guard *Electra*.

CASSANDRA.

The most grateful gift
A tyrant can bestow is instant death.
We shall be happy soon. But all the gods,
Combining all their mercy, from remorse,
From scorn and misery, cannot save the villain.

End of the Fifth Act.

EPI

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. CIBBER.

OUR bard, to modern epilogue a foe,
Thinks such mean mirth but deadens generous woe;
Dispels in idle air the moral sigh,
And wipes the tender tear from pity's eye;
No more with social warmth the bosom burns;
But all th' unfeeling selfish man returns.

*
Thus he began:—And you approv'd the strain;
'Till the next couplet sunk to light in vain.
You check'd him there.—To you, to reason just,
He owns he triumph'd in your kind disgust.
Charm'd by your frown, by your displeasure grac'd,
He bails the rising virtue of your taste.
Wide will its influence spread as soon as known:
Truth, to be lov'd, needs only to be shown.
Confirm it, once, the fashion to be good:

* Another epilogue was spoken after the first representation of the play, which began with the first six lines of this: but the rest of that epilogue, having been very justly disliked by the audience, this was substituted in its place.

(Since

(Since fashion leads the fool, and awes the rude)

No petulance shall wound the public ear ;

No hand applaud what honour shuns to hear :

No painful blush the modest cheek shall stain ;

The worthy breast shall heave with no disdain.

Chastis'd to decency, the British stage

Shall oft invite the fair, invite the sage :

Both shall attend well pleas'd, well-pleas'd depart ;

Or if they doom the verse, absolve the heart.

Represented before their Royal Highnesses
the Prince and Princess of Wales
at Chiffen, on the 11th of August, 1740.

By Mr. THOMSON and Mr. Mallet.

ALFRED:

ALFREDO:

MASQUE.

Represented before their Royal Highnesses
the PRINCE and PRINCESS of *Wales*,
at *Cliffden*, on the first of *August*, 1740.

By Mr. THOMSON and Mr. MALLET.

*Si velimus cum priorum temporum necessitate certare,
vincemur. Ingeniosior est enim ad excogitandum si-
mulatio, veritate; servitus, libertate; metus, amo-
re.*

Plin. Pan. Trajan.

THE ARGUMENT.

After the Danes had made themselves masters of Chippenham, the strongest city in the kingdom of Wessex; Alfred was at once abandoned by all his subjects. In this universal desertion, that monarch found himself obliged to retire into the little Isle of Athelney in Somersetshire; a place then rough with woods and of difficult access. There, in the habit of a peasant, he lived unknown, for some time, in a shepherd's cottage. He is supposed to be found in this retreat by the Earl of Devon; whose castle, upon river Taw, was then besieged by the Danes.

The A R G U M E N T.

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The PERSONS.

ALFRED,

Mr. MILWARD.

ELTRUDA,

Mrs. HORTON.

HERMIT,

Mr. QUIN.

EARL of Devon,

Mr. MILLS.

CORIN, a shepherd,

Mr. SALWAY.

EMMA, his wife,

Mrs. CLIVE.

A Bard, Soldiers, Spirits.

The SCENE represents a plain, surrounded with woods.

*On one side, a cottage : on the other, flocks and herds
in distant prospect. A hermit's cave in full view,*

overhung with trees, wild and grotesque.

A L F R E D:

M A S Q U E.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

CORIN, EMMA.

EMMA.

Shepherd, 'tis he. Beneath yon aged oak,
All on the flowery turf he lays him down.

CORIN.

Soft : let us not disturb him. Gentle Emma,
Poor tho' he be, unfriended and unknown,
My pity waits with reverence on his fortune,
Modest of carriage, and of speech most gracious,
As if some faint or angel, in disguise,
Had grac'd our lowly cottage with his presence,

He

He steals, I know not how, into the heart,
And makes it pant to serve him. Trust me, *Emma*,
He is no common man.

EMMA.

Some lord, perhaps,
Or valiant chief, that from our deadly foe,
The haughty, cruel, unbelieving *Dane*,
Seeks shelter here.

CORIN.

And shelter he shall find.
Who loves his country, is my friend and brother.
Behold him well. Fair virtue in his aspect,
Even thro' the homely ruffet that conceals him,
Shines forth and proves him noble. Seest thou, *Emma*,
Yon western clouds? The sun they strive to hide,
Yet darts his beam around.

EMMA.

Your thought is mine :
He is not what his present fortunes speak him,
But, ah! the raging foe is all around us :
We dare not keep him here.

CORIN.

Content thee, wife :
This island is of strength. Nature's own hand
Hath planted round a deep defence of woods,
The founding ash, the mighty oak ; each tree
A sheltering grove : and choak'd up all between
With wild encumbrance of perplexing thorns,
And horrid brakes. Beyond this woody verge,

Two

Two rivers broad and rapid hem us in.
 Along their channel spreads the gulphy pool,
 And trembling quagmire, whose deceitful green
 Betrays the foot it tempts. One path alone
 Winds to this plain, so roughly difficult,
 This single arm, poor shepherd as I am,
 Could well dispute it with twice twenty *Danes*.

EMMA.

Yet think, my *Corin*, on the stern decree
 Of that proud foe, "Who harbours or relieves
 "An *English* captain, dies the death of traitors:
 "But who their haunts discovers, shall be safe,
 "And high rewarded."

CORIN.

Now, just heaven forbid,
 A *British* man should ever count for gain
 What villainy must earn. No: are we poor?
 Be honesty our riches. Are we mean,
 And humbly born? The true heart makes us noble.
 These hands can toil, can sow the ground and reap
 For thee and thy sweet babes. Our daily labour
 Is daily wealth: it finds us bread and raiment.
 Could *Danish* gold give more? And for the death
 These tyrants threaten, let me rather meet it,
 Than e'er betray my guest. —

EMMA.

Alas the while,
 That loyal faith is fled from hall and bower,
 To dwell with village-swains!

CORIN.

CORIN.

Ah look ! behold !

Where, like some goodly tree by wintry winds
Torn from the roots and withering, our sad guest
Lies on the ground diffus'd.

EMMA.

I weep to see it.

CORIN.

Thou hast a heart sweet pity loves to dwell in.
Dry up thy tears ; and lean on this just hope :
If yet to do away his country's shame,
To serve her bravely on some blest occasion,
If for these ends this stranger fought our cottage,
The heavenly hosts are hovering here unseen,
To watch and to protect him.—But oh ! when—
My heart burns for it—shall I see the hour
Of vengeance on those *Danish* infidels,
That war with heaven and us ?

EMMA.

Alas, my love !

These passions are not for the poor man's state.
To heaven and to the rulers of the land
Leave such ambitious thoughts. Be warn'd, my *Corin* :
And think our little all depends on thee.

SONG.

SONG.

*O peace! the fairest child of heaven,
To whom the sylvan reign was given,
The vale, the fountain and the grove,
With every softer scene of love:
Return, sweet peace! and cheer the weeping swain;
Return, with Ease and Pleasure in thy train.*

CORIN.

Hush: cease thy song—For see, our mournful guest
Has rais'd his head—and lo! who comes to greet him;
His friend, the woodman of the neighbouring dale,
Whom late, as yester evening-star arose,
At his request I found and hither brought.

SCENE II.

ALFRED, *Earl of Devon.*

ALFRED.

How long, O ever gracious heaven! how long
Shall war thus desolate this prostrate land?
All, all is lost—And *Alfred* lives to tell it!
His cities laid in dust! his subjects slaughter'd!
Or into slaves debas'd! the murderous foe
Proud and exulting in the general shame!—

Are

Are these things so? and he without the means
Of great revenge? cast down below the hope!
Of succouring those he weeps for? O despair!
O grief of griefs!

DEVON.

Old as I am, my liege,
In rough war harden'd, and with death familiar,
These eyes have long forgot to melt with softness:
But O, my gracious master, they have seen——
All-pitying heaven!—such fights of ruthless rage,
Of total desolation—

ALFRED.

O my people!
O ruin'd *England*!—*Devon*, those were blest,
Who dy'd before this time. Ha! and those robbers,
That violate the sanctity of leagues,
The reverend seal of oaths; that basely broke,
Like nightly ruffians, on the hour of peace,
And stole a victory from men unarm'd,
Those *Danes* enjoy their crimes! dread vengeance! son
Of power and justice! come, array'd in terrors,
Thy garment red with blood, thy keen sword drawn:
Come, and on the heads of faithless men
Pour ample retribution; men whose triumph
Upbraids eternal justice.—But no more:
Submission is heaven's due.—I will not launch
Into that dark abyss where thought must drown.
Proceed, my lord: on with the mournful tale,
My griefs broke off.

DEVON.

DEVON.

From yonder heath-crown'd hill,
 This island's eastern point, where in one stream
 The *Thone* and *Parret* roll their blending waves,
 I look'd, and saw the progress of the foe,
 As of some tempest, some devouring fire,
 That ruins without mercy where it spreads.
 The riches of the year, the golden grain
 That liberal crown'd our plains, lies trampled wide
 By hostile feet, or rooted up; and waste
 Deforms the broad high-way. From space to space,
 Far as my straining eye could shoot its beam,
 Trees, cottages, and castles, smoak to heaven
 In one ascending cloud. But oh for pity!
 That way, my lord, where yonder verdant height
 Declining slides into a fruitful vale,
 Unfightly now and bare; a few poor hinds,
 Grey-hair'd, and thinly clad, stood and beheld
 The common ravage: motionless and mute
 With hands to heaven uprais'd, they stood, and wept—
 My tears attended theirs —

ALFRED.

If this sad sight
 Could pain thee to such anguish, what must I
 Their king and parent feel?—It is a torment
 Beyond the strength of patience to endure.
 Why end I not at once this wretched being?
 The means are in my hand.—But shall a prince
 Thus poorly shroud him in the grave from pain,

And sense of shame? The madman, nay the coward,
Has often dar'd the same. A monarch holds
His life in trust for others. I will live then:
Let heaven dispose the rest.

DEVON.

Thrice-noble *Alfred*,
And *England's* only hope, whose virtues raise
Our frail mortality, our human dust,
Up to angelic splendor and perfection;
With you to bear the worst of ills, the spoil
Of wasteful war, the loss of life or freedom,
Is happiness, is glory.

ALFRED.

Ah, look round thee:
That mud-built cottage is thy sovereign's palace.
Yon hind, whose daily toil is all his wealth,
Lodges and feeds him. Are these times for flattery,
Or call it praise? such gaudy attributes
Would misbecome our best and proudest fortunes.
But what are mine? what is this high-prais'd *Alfred*?
Among ten thousand wretches, most undone.
That prince who sees his country laid in ruins,
His subjects perishing beneath the sword
Of foreign rage, who sees and cannot save them,
Is but supreme in misery!

DEVON.

My Liege,
Who has not known ill fortune, never knew
Himself, or his own virtue. Be of comfort:

We can but die at last. Till that hour comes,
 Let noble anger keep our hopes alive.
 A sudden thought, as if from heaven inspir'd,
 Darts on my soul. One castle still is ours,
 Tho' close begirt and shaken by the *Danes*.
 In this disguise, my chance of passing on,
 Of entering there unknown, is promising,
 And wears a lucky face. 'Tis our last stake,
 And I will play it like a man whose life,
 Whose honour hangs upon a single cast.
 Mean while, my lord——

ALFRED.

Ha! *Devon*, thou hast rous'd
 My slumbering virtue. I applaud thy thought.
 The praise of this brave daring shall be thine:
 The danger shall be common. We will both
 Strait tempt the *Danish* camp, and gain this fort;
 To animate our brothers of the war,
 Those *Englishmen* who yet deserve that name.
 And hear, eternal Justice! if my life
 Can make atonement for them, King of Kings!
 Accept thy willing victim. On my head
 Be all their woes: To them be grace and mercy.
 Come on, my noble friend.

DEVON.

Ah, good my liege,
 What fits a private valor, and might grace
 The simple soldier's courage, would proclaim
 His general's rashness. You are *England's* king:

Your infant children, and your much-lov'd queen ;
 Nay more, the public weal, ten thousand souls,
 Whose hope you are, whose all depends on you,
 Forbid this enterprize. 'Tis nobler virtue
 To check this ardor, to reserve your sword
 For some great day of known and high import ;
 That to your country, to the judging world
 Shall justify all hazards you may run.
 This trial suits but me.

ALFRED.

Well, go, my friend ;
 If thou shalt prosper, thou wilt call me hence
 To head my people from their fears recover'd.
 May that good angel, who inspir'd thy thought,
 Throw round thy steps a veil of cloudy air,
 That thou mayst walk invisible and safe.
 He's gone — and now without a friend to aid me,
 I stand alone, abandon'd to the gloom
 Of my sad thoughts—Said I without a friend ?
 Oh blasphemous distrust ! Have I not Thee
 All-powerful friend and guardian of the righteous,
 Have I not Thee to aid me ? Let that thought
 Support my drooping soul.—But, list. Ha ! whence
 These air-born notes that sound in measur'd sweetness
 Thro' this vast silence ?

SIC E N E

SCENE III.

Solemn music is heard at a distance. It comes nearer in a full symphony: after which a single trumpet sounds a high and awakening air. Then the following stanzas are sung by two aërial spirits unseen.

First SPIRIT.

*Hear, Alfred, father of the state,
Thy genius heaven's high will declare!
What proves the hero truly great,
Is never, never to despair:
Is never to despair.*

Second SPIRIT.

*Thy hope awake, thy heart expand
With all its vigor, all its fires.
Arise! and save a sinking land!
Thy country calls, and heaven inspires.*

Both SPIRITS.

Earth calls, and heaven inspires.

SCENE IV.

ALFRED alone.

*All hail, ye gentle ministers of heaven!
Your song inspires new patience thro' my breast,*

L 3

And

And generous hope: it wings my mounting soul
 Above th' entangling mafs of earthly paffions,
 That keep frail man, tho' struggling to be free,
 Still fluttering in the duft.

SCENE V.

ALFRED, *the HERMIT advancing from his cave.*

ALFRED.

Thrice-happy Hermit!

Whom thus the heavenly habitants attend,
 Blessing thy calm retreat; while ruthless war
 Fills the polluted land with blood and crimes.
 In this extremity of *England's* fate,
 Led by thy sacred character, I come
 For comfort and advice. Thy aged wisdom,
 Purg'd from the stormy cloud of human paffions,
 And by a ray from heaven exalted, fees
 Deep thro' futurity. Say what remains,
 What yet remains to fave our prostrate country?
 Nor scorn this anxious question even from me,
 A nameless stranger.

HERMIT.

Alfred, England's king,

All hail! and welcome to this humble cell.

ALFRED.

Whence dost thou know me, venerable father?

HERMIT.

HERMIT.

Last night, when with a draught from that cool fountain
I had my wholsome, sober supper crown'd ;
As is my stated custom, forth I walk'd,
Beneath the solemn gloom and glittering sky,
To feed my soul with prayer and meditation.
And thus to inward harmony compos'd,
That sweetest music of the grateful heart,
Whose each emotion is a silent hymn,
I to my couch retir'd. Strait on mine eyes
A pleasing slumber fell, whose mystic power
Seal'd up my senses, but enlarg'd my soul.
At once, disclos'd amid the dark waste night,
Appear'd a vision—not the dream of fancy,
But sent from heav'n, prophetic, and divine.
For know, this ample element contains
Unnumber'd spiritual beings, or malign,
Or good to man. These, when the grosser eye
Of nature sleeps, oft play their several parts,
As on a scene, before th' attentive mind,
And to the favour'd man disclose the future.
Led by these spirits friendly to this isle,
I liv'd thro' future ages ; felt the virtue,
The great, the glorious passions that will fire
Distant posterity : when guardian laws
Are by the patriot in the glowing senate
Won from corruption ; when th' impatient arm
Of liberty, invincible, shall scourge
The tyrants of mankind—and when the deep,

Through all her swelling waves, shall proudly joy
 Beneath the boundless empire of thy sons.
 I saw thee, *Alfred*, too—But o'er thy fortunes
 Lay clouds impenetrable.

ALFRED.

Ah, good hermit,
 That scene is dark indeed! Ye awful powers!
 To what am I reserv'd? Still must I roam
 A wanderer here, inglorious and unknown?
 Or am I destin'd your great instrument,
 From fierce oppression to redeem this land?

HERMIT.

Perhaps, the last.—But, prince, remember, then,
 The vows, the noble uses, of affliction.
 Preserve the quick humanity it gives,
 The pitying, social sense of human weakness:
 Yet keep thy stubborn fortitude entire,
 The manly heart that to another's woe
 Is tender, but superior to its own.
 Learn to submit; yet learn to conquer fortune.
 Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
 And offices of life: to life itself,
 With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.
 Chief, let devotion to the sovereign mind,
 A steady, chearful, absolute dependance
 On his best, wisest government, possess thee.
 In thoughtless, gay prosperity, when all
 Attends our wish, when nought is seen around us
 But kneeling flattery, and obedient fortune;

Then

Then are blind mortals apt, within themselves
To fix their stay, forgetful of the giver.
But when thus humbled, *Alfred*, as thou art,
When to their feeble natural powers reduc'd,
'Tis then they feel this universal truth—
That heaven is all in all—and man is nothing.

A L F R E D.

I thank thee, father, for thy pious counsel.
And witness, thou dread power! who seest my heart;
That if not to perform my regal task,
To be the common father of my people,
Patron of honour, virtue and religion;
If not to shelter industry, to guard
Her honest portion from oppressive pride,
From wasteful riot, and the sons of rapine,
Who basely ravish what they dare not earn;
If not to deal out justice, like the sun,
With equal light; if not to spread thy bounty,
The treasures trusted to me, not my own,
On all the smiling ranks of nourish'd life;
If not to raise our drooping *English* name,
To clothe it yet with terrour; make this land
Renown'd for peaceful arts to bless mankind,
And generous war to humble proud oppressors:
If not to build on an eternal base,
On liberty and laws, the public weal:
If not for these great ends I am ordain'd,
May I ne'er idly fill the throne of *England*!

HERMIT.

Still may thy breast these sentiments retain,
In prosperous life.

ALFRED.

Prosperity were ruin,
Could it destroy or change such thoughts as these.
When Those whom heaven distinguishes o'er millions,
Profusely gives them honours, riches, power,
Whate'er th' expanded heart can wish ; when they,
Accepting the reward, neglect the duty ;
Or worse, pervert those gifts to deeds of ruin :
Is there a wretch they rule so mean as they ?
Guilty, at once of sacrilege to heaven,
And of perfidious robbery to men——
But hark ! methinks I hear a plaintive voice
Sigh thro' the vale, and wake the mournful echo.

S O N G.

I.

*Sweet valley, say, where, pensive lying,
For me, our children, England, sighing,
The best of mortals leans his head.
Ye fountains, dimpled by my sorrow,
Ye brooks that my complainings borrow,
O lead me to his lonely bed :
Or if my lover,
Deep woods, you cover,
Ab whisper where your shadows o'er him spread !*

2. 'Tis

2.

'Tis not the loss of pomp and pleasure,
 Of empire, or of tinsel treasure,
 That drops this tear, that swells this groan :
 No ; from a nobler cause proceeding,
 A heart with love and fondness bleeding,
 I breathe my sadly-pleasing moan.
 With other anguish
 I scorn to languish :
 For love will feel no sorrows but his own.

SCENE VI.

ALFRED, HERMIT, ELTRUDA, *advancing.*

ALFRED:

Sure, by the voice, and purport of the song,
 This generous mourner is my queen *Eltruda*.
 And yet how can that be?—O all good powers !
 'Tis she ! 'tis she !

ELTRUDA.

My lord, my life, my *Alfred* !
 Oh take me to thy arms ; with toil o'ercome,
 And sudden transport, thus at once to find thee,
 In this wild forest, pathless and perplex !

ALFRED.

Come to my soul, thou dearest, best of women !
 Come, and repose thy sorrows in my bosom.

L 6.

O all

O all my passions mix in doubtful strife!
 If pain or joy prevail, I scarce can say,
 While thus I clasp thee, and recall the perils
 To which thy trembling steps have been expos'd.
 Why hast thou left the convent where I plac'd thee?
 Why, unprotected, trust thee to a land,
 A barbarous land where rages *Danish* war!
 Our hospitable *England* is no more!

ELTRUDA.

Dire was the cause, my *Alfred*. The rous'd country,
 All wild in breathless terror and confusion,
 Inform'd us, a near party of the *Danes*,
 Whose brutal fury spares no sex, no age,
 No place however privileg'd or holy,
 Were on full march that way. Instant I fled,
 In this disguise, with only these attendants:
 But in our way oft chear'd by airy voices,
 To bear to this retreat our helpless children.

ALFRED.

Ah wanderers too young! ah hapless children!
 But more unhappy Sire! who cannot give,
 To those he loves, protection.

ELTRUDA.

Thou too, *Alfred*,
 Art thou not unattended? None to serve thee,
 To soothe thy woes, to watch thy broken slumbers!
 And when the silent tear o'erflows thy eye,
 None, with the warm and cordial lip of love,

To

To kiss it off! There is in love a power,
 There is a soft divinity, that draws
 Transport even from distress; that gives the heart
 A certain pang, excelling far the joys
 Of gross unfeeling life. Besides, my *Alfred*,
 Even had the fury of this barbarous foe
 Not forc'd me from the convent, life is short;
 And now it trembles on the wing of danger:
 Why should we lose it then? One well-fav'd hour,
 In such a tender circumstance to lovers,
 Is better than an age of common time.

A L F R E D.

Oh 'tis too much! thy tenderness o'ercomes me!
 Nay, look not on me with that sweet dejection,
 Thro' tears that pierce my soul!—Chear thee, my love:
 Hope still the best; that better days await us,
 And fairer from remembrance.—Thou, *Eltruda*,
 Thou art a pledge of happiness!—On thee
 Good angels wait; they led thy journey hither:
 And I have heard them, in this wild retreat,
 Warbling immortal airs, and strains of comfort.—
 But ah the foe is round us: and this isle
 Now holds my soul's best wealth, the treasur'd store
 Of all my joys.—I go to skirt it round,
 To visit every creek and sedge bank,
 Where rustles thro' the reeds the shadowy gale;
 Or where the bending umbrage drinks the stream;
 Lest danger unawares should steal upon us.

And.

And now, by slow degrees, solemn and sad,
Wide-falling o'er the world, the nightly shades
Hush the brown woods, and deepen all their horrors:
While humbled into rest, and aw'd by darkness,
Each creature seeks the covert. To that cell
Retire, my life. I will not long be absent.

End of the First Act.

ACT

ACT II. SCENE I.

ALFRED *alone.*

TIS now the depth of darkness and repose.
 All nature seems to rest : while *Alfred* wakes
 To think, and to be wretched.—Where yon oak
 With wide and dusky shade o'erhangs the stream,
 That glides in silence by, I took my stand :
 What time the glow-worm thro' the dewy path
 First shot his twinkling flame. I stood attentive,
 Listening each noise from wood-clad hill and dale ;
 But all was hush'd around. Nor trumpet's clang,
 Nor shout of roving foe, nor hasty tread
 Of evening passenger, disturb'd the wide
 And awful stillness. Homeward as I sped,
 O'er many a delve, thro' many a path perplex,
 Maze running into maze ; ill-boding thoughts
 Haunted my steps.—Perhaps my gallant friend,
 Discover'd to the *Danes*, this moment bleeds
 Beneath their swords ! or lies a breathless corse,
 The prey of midnight wolves.—Some mournful sound
 Strikes sudden on my sense,

SCENE

SCENE II.

ALFRED, ELTRUDA.

ELTRUDA.

Here will I lean
On this green bank, to wait the wish'd return
Of morning and my lord.

ALFRED.

My gentle love,
Eltruda, why to this untimely sky
Expose thy health? The dews of night fall fast:
The chill breeze sighs aloud.

ELTRUDA.

I could not rest.
Can love repose when apprehension wakes,
And whispers to the heart all dreadful things,
That walk with night and solitude? Methought,
In each low murmur of the woods, I heard
Th' invading foe—or heard my *Alfred* groan!
Our tender infants too—their fancy'd cries
Still found within my ears!

ALFRED.

Eltruda, there:
I am a woman too: I who should cheer,
And shelter thee from every care. My children!
The thought of what may chance to them, compleats
Their father's sum of woes. O what safe shade

Can

Can screen their opening blossom from the storm
That beats severe on us! Not sweeter buds
The primrose in the vale, nor sooner shrinks
At winter's churlish blast—

ELTRUDA.

Behold, my lord—
Good angels shield us—What a flood of brightness
Waves round our heads!

ALFRED.

The hermit moves this way.
That wondrous man holds converse with the host
Of higher natures. These far beaming fires
Were doubtless kindled up at his command.
Be silent and attentive.

SCENE III.

ALFRED, ELTRUDA, HERMIT.

HERMIT.

I have heard,
Thy fond complainings, *Alfred*.

ALFRED.

You have then,
Good father, heard the cause that wrings them from me.

HERMIT.

The human race are sons of sorrow born :
And each must have his portion. Vulgar minds

Refuse,

Refuse, or crouch beneath their load ; the brave
Bear theirs without repining.

ALFRED.

Who can bear
The shaft that wounds him thro' an infant's side ?
When whom we love, to whom we owe protection,
Implore the hand we cannot reach to save them ?

HERMIT.

Weep not, *Eltruda*.—Yet thou art a king,
All private passions fall before that name.
Thy subjects claim thee whole.

ALFRED.

Can public trust,
O reverend sage ! destroy the softer ties
That twine around the parent's yearning heart ?
That holy passion heaven itself infus'd,
And blended with the stream that feeds our life.

HERMIT.

You love your children, prince—

ALFRED.

Lives there on earth,
In air, or ocean, creature tame or wild
That has not known this universal love ?
All nature feels it intimate and deep,
And all her sons of instinct or of reason.

HERMIT.

Then shew that passion in its noblest form.
Season their tender years with every virtue,
Social or self-retir'd ; of public greatness,

Or

Or lovely in the hour of private life ;
With all that can exalt, or can adorn
Their princely rank.

ALFRED.

Alas, their hope must stoop,
Such my unhappy fate, to humbler aims :
Affliction and base want must be their teachers.

HERMIT.

Affliction is the wholesome soil of virtue :
Where patience, honour, sweet humanity,
Calm fortitude take root, and strongly flourish.
But prosperous fortune, that allures with pleasure,
Dazles with pomp, and undermines with flattery,
Poisons the soil, and its best product kills.
Should'st thou regain thy throne—

ALFRED.

My throne ? What glimpse,
What smallest ray of hope—

HERMIT.

That day may come—

What do I feel ? My labouring breast expands
To give the glorious inspiration room.
And now the cloud that o'er thy future fate,
Like total night, lay heavy and obscure,
Fades into air : and all the brightening scene
Dawns gay before me ! A long line of kings,
From thee descending, glorious and renown'd,
In shadowy pomp I see !

Genius

Genius of *England*! hovering near,
In all thy radiant charms appear.

O come and summon, from the world unknown,
Those mighty chiefs, those sons of future fame,
Who, ages hence, this island shall adorn,
And spread to distant realms her glorious name.
Slow let the visionary forms arise,
And solemn pass before our wondring eyes.

[*Music grand and awful. The Genius descending
sings the following*

S O N G.

*From those eternal regions bright,
Where suns, that never set in night,
Diffuse the golden day:
Where spring unfading pours around,
O'er all the dew-impearl'd ground,
Her thousand colours gay:*
O whether on the fountain's flowery side,
Whence living waters glide,
Or in the fragrant grove,
Whose shade embosoms peace and love,
New pleasures all your hours employ,
And ravish every sense with every joy!
Great heirs of empire! yet unborn,
Who shall this island late adorn;

A monarch's drooping thought to chear,

Appear ! appear ! appear !

Spirits of EDWARD III. PHILIPPA his queen,

and the Black Prince his son, arise.

HERMIT.

Alfred, look ; and say,

What seest thou yonder ?

ALFRED.

Three majestic shapes :

Two habited like mighty warriors old ;

A third in whose bright aspect beauty smiles

More soft and feminine. A lucid veil,

From her fair neck dependant floats around,

Light-hovering in the gale.

HERMIT.

O *Alfred*, man

Belov'd of heaven, behold a king *indeed* ;

Matchless in arms ; in arts of peaceful rule,

A sovereign's truest glory, yet more fam'd,

England's third *Edward* !—At his fear'd approach,

Proud *France*, even now, thro' all her dukedoms quakes.

Her Genius sighs : and from th' eternal shore,

The soul of her great *Charles*, a recent guest,

Looks back to earth, and mourns the distant woes,

His realms are doom'd to feel from *Edward's* wrath.

Beneath his standard, *Britain* shall go forth,

Array'd for conquest, terrible in glory :

And nations shrink before her. O what deaths,

What

What desolation shall her vengeance spread,
 From engines yet unfound ; whose lightnings flash,
 Whose thunders roar, amazing, o'er the plain :
 As if this king had summon'd from on high
 Heaven's dread artillery to fight his battle !

Nor is renown in war his sole ambition :
 A nobler passion labours in his breast —
Alfred attend—to make his people blest !
 The sacred rights that reason loudly claims
 For free-born men—these, *Alfred*, are his care :
 Oft to confirm, and fix them on the base
 Of equal laws.—O father of mankind !
 Successive praises from a grateful land
 Shall faint thy name for ever !

ALFRED.

Holy sage,
 Whom angels thus enlighten and inspire,
 My bosom kindles at thy heaven-born flame.
 Great *Edward* ! Be thy conquests and their praise
 Unrival'd to thy self. But O thy fame
 For care paternal of the public weal ;
 For *England* blest at home—my rapt heart pants
 To equal that renown !

HERMIT.

Know farther, *Alfred* ;
 A sovereign's great example forms a people.
 The public breast is noble, or is vile,
 As he inspires it. In this *Edward*'s time,
 Warm'd by his courage, by his honour rais'd,

High

High flames the *British* spirit like the sun,
To shine o'er half the globe : and where it shines,
The cherish'd world to brighten and enrich.

Last see this monarch in his hour of leisure ;
Even social on a throne, and tasting joys
To solitary greatness seldom known,
As friend, as husband, and as father blest.
That god-like *Youth* remark, his eldest hope,
Who gives new lustre to the name he bears ;
A hero ere a man.—I see him now
On *Creffy's* glorious plain ! The father's heart,
With anxious love and wonder at his daring,
Beats high in mingled transport. Great himself,
Great above *jealousy*, the guilty mark
That brands all meaner minds, see, he applauds
The *filial excellence*, and gives him scope
To blaze in his full brightness !—Lo, again
He sends him dreadful to a nobler field :
The danger and the glory all his own !
A *captive king*, the rival of his arms,
I see adorn his triumph ! Heaven ! what grace
What splendor from his gracious temper mild
That triumph draws ! As gentle mercy kind,
He cheers the hostile prince whose fall he weeps !

ALFRED.

A son so rich in virtues, and so grac'd
With all that gives those virtues fair to shine,
When I would ask of heaven some mighty boon,
Should claim the foremost place.

HERMIT.

HERMIT.

Remember then,
What to thy infant sons from thee is due,
As parent and as prince.

ELTRUDA.

Forgive me, Hermit,
Forgive a queen and wife her anxious fondness.
Yon beauteous shade, that, as I gaze her o'er,
My wonder draws, escapes your graver thought.

HERMIT.

O bright *Eltruda* ! thou whose blooming youth,
Whose amiable sweetness promise blessings
To *Alfred* and to *England* ! see, and mark,
In yonder pleasing form, the best of wives,
The happiest too, repaid with all the faith,
With all the friendship, love and duty claim.
She, powerful o'er the heart her charms enslave —
O virtue rarely practis'd ! — uses nobly
That happy influence ; to prompt each purpose
Fair honour kindles in her *Edward*'s breast.
Amid the pomps, the pleasures of a court,
Humble of heart, severely good ; the friend
Of modest worth, the parent of the poor.
Eltruda ! O transmit these noblest charms
To that fair *daughter*, that unfolding rose,
With which, * *as on this day*, heaven crown'd your loves.

* This masque was written to be acted at Clifden, on the birthday of her Royal Highness the princess Augusta.

The spirit of ELIZABETH arises.

ALFRED.

Say, who is she, in whom the noble graces,
Th' engaging manner, dignity and ease,
Are join'd with manly sense and resolution?

HERMIT.

The great *Eliza*. She, amid a world
That threatening swells in high commotion round her;
Each dangerous state her unrelenting foe,
And chief a proud enormous empire stretch'd
O'er half mankind; with not one friendly power,
But what her kind creating hand shall raise
From out the marshes of the branching *Rhine*;
And min'd, at home, her ever-tottering throne
By restless bigots, who, beneath the mask
Of mild religion, are to every crime
Set loose, the faithless sons of barbarous zeal:
Yet she shall crown this happy isle with peace,
With arts, with riches, grandeur and renown;
And quell, by turns, the madness of her foes.
As when the winds, from different quarters, urge
The tempest on our shore: secure, the cliffs
Repel its idle rage, and pour it back,
In broken billows, foaming to the main.

ALFRED.

How shall she, Hermit, gain these glorious ends ?

HERMIT.

By silent wisdom, whose informing power
Works unperceiv'd : that seems in council flow ;
But, when resolv'd, and ripe for execution,
That parts like lightning from the secret gloom :
By ever seizing the right *point of view*,
Her truest interest ; which she firm pursues,
With steady patience, thro the maze of state,
The storm of opposition, the mixt views,
And thwarting manag'd passions of mankind :
By healing the divisions of her people,
And sowing that fell pest among her foes :
By saving, from the vermin of a court,
Her treasure ; which, when fair occasion calls,
She knows to lavish, in protecting arts,
In guarding nations, and in nursing states :
By calling up to power, and public life,
Each virtue, each ability : yet *she*,
Amid the various worthies glowing round her,
Still shines the first ; the central sun that wakes,
That rules their every motion : not the slave,
And passive property of her own creatures.
But the great soul that animates her reign,
That lights it to perfection, is the love,
The confidence unbounded, which her wisdom,

Her

Her probity and justice, shall inspire
 Into the public breast. Hence cordial faith,
 Which nought can shake ; hence unexhausted treasure :
 And hence, above all mercenary force,
 The hand that by the freeborn heart is rais'd,
 And guards the blended weal of Prince and People.
 She too shall raise *Britannia's* naval power ;
 Shall greatly ravish, from insulting *Spain*,
 The world-commanding scepter of the deep.

ELTRUDA.

O matchless queen ! O glory of her sex !
 The great idea, father, fills my soul,
 And bids it glow beyond a woman's passions.

Spirit of WILLIAM III. arises.

HERMIT.

Once more, O *Alfred*, raise thine eyes, and mark,
 Who next adorns the scene, yon laurel'd *shade*.
 Ere yet the age that clos'd this female reign
 Hath led around its train of circling years,
 Shall *Britain* on the verge of ruin stand.
 A monarch, lost to greatness, to renown,
 The slave of dreaming monks, shall fill her throne.
 Weak and aspiring ; fond of lawless rule,
 The lawless rule his mean ambition covets
 Unequal to acquire. Yon prince thou saw'st,

M 2.

To

To glory tutor'd by the hand severe
 Of sharp Adversity, shall heaven upraise,
 And injur'd nations with joint call invoke,
 Their last, their only refuge. Lo! he comes:
 Wide o'er the billows of the boundless deep
 His navy rides triumphant: and the shores
 Of shouting *Albion* echo with his name.
 Immortal *William*! from before his face,
 Flies Superstition, flies oppressive Power,
 With vile Servility that crouch'd and kiss'd
 The whip he trembled at. From this great hour
 Shall *Britain* date her rights and laws rector'd:
 And one high purpose rule her sovereign's heart;
 To scourge the pride of *France*, that foe profess'd
 To *England* and to Freedom. Yet I see,
 From distant climes in peaceful triumph borne,
 Another KING arise! His early youth
 With verdant laurel crown'd, for deeds of arms
 That Reason's voice approves; for courage, rais'd
 Beyond all aid from passion, greatly calm!
 Intrepidly serene!—In days of peace,
 Around his throne the human virtues wait,
 And fair adorn him with their mildest beams;
 Good without show, above ambition great;
 Wise, equal, merciful, the friend of man!

O *Alfred*! should thy fate, long ages hence,
 In meaning scenes recall'd, exalt the joy

Of some glad festal day, before a *prince*
 Sprung from that king belov'd—Hear, gracious heaven!
 Thy soft humanity, thy patriot heart,
 Thy manly virtue, steddy, great, resolv'd,
 Be his supreme ambition! and with these,
 The happiness, the glory, that await
 Thy better days, be shower'd upon his head!

ALFRED.

O Hermit! thou hast rais'd me to new life!
 New hopes, new triumphs swell my bounding heart—

HERMIT.

It comes! it comes!—The promis'd scene discloses!
 Already the great work of fate begins!
 The mighty wheels are turning, whence will spread,
 Beyond the limits of our narrow world,
 The fair dominions, *Alfred*, of thy sons.
 Behold the warrior bright with *Danish* spoils!—
 The *raven* droops his wings—and hark! the trumpet,
 Exulting, speaks the rest.

M 3

SCENE

SCENE IV.

Symphony of martial music.

ALFRED, ELTRUDA, HERMIT, *Earl of Devon,*
followed by soldiers.

ALFRED.

My friend return'd!
O welcome, welcome! but what happy tidings
Smile in thy chearful countenance?—

DEVON.

My Liege,
Your troops have been successful.—But to heaven
Ascend the praise! For sure th' event exceeds
The hand of man.

ALFRED,

How was it, noble *Devon*?

DEVON.

You know my castle is not hence far-distant,
Thither I sped: and in a *Danish* habit
The trenches passing, by a secret way,
Known to myself alone, emerg'd at once
Amid my joyful soldiers.—There I found
A generous few, the veteran, hardy gleanings

of

Of many a hapless fight. They with a fierce
 Heroic fire inspirited each other ;
 Resolv'd on death, disdaining to survive
 Their dearest country.—“ If we fall, I cry'd,
 “ Let us not tamely fall like passive cowards !
 “ No : let us live—or let us die, like men !
 “ Come on, my friends : to *Alfred* we will cut
 “ Our glorious way ; or, as we will nobly perish,
 “ Will offer to the genius of our country
 “ Whole hecatombs of *Danes*.”—As if one soul
 Had mov'd them all, around their heads they flash'd
 Their flaming faulchions—“ Lead us to these *Danes* !—
 “ Our country !—vengeance !” was the general cry.
 Strait on the careless drousy camp we rush'd :
 And rapid, as the flame devours the stubble,
 Bore down the heartless *Danes*. With this success
 Our enterprize encreas'd. Not now contented
 To hew a passage thro' the flying herd ;
 We, unremitting, urg'd a total rout.
 The valiant *Hubba* bites the bloody field,
 With twice six hundred *Danes* around him strow'd.
 A L F R E D.
 My glorious friend !—this action has restor'd
 Our sinking county.—What reward can equal
 A deed so great ?—Is not yon pictur'd *Raven*
 Their famous magic standard—Emblem fit
 To speak the savage genius of the people—

That oft has scatter'd on our troops dismay,
And feeble consternation?

DEVON.

'Tis the same.

Wrought by the sisters of the *Danish* king,
Of furious *Ivar*, in a midnight hour :
While the sick moon, at their enchanted song,
Wrapt in pale tempest, labour'd thro' the clouds,
The *Demons* of destruction then, they say,
Were all abroad, and mixing with the woof
Their baleful power : The sisters ever sung ;
“ Shake, standard, shake, this ruin on our foes ! ”

HERMIT.

So these infernal powers, with rays of truth
Still deck their fables, to delude who trust them.

ALFRED.

But where, my noble cousin, are the rest
Of your brave troops?

DEVON.

On t'other side the stream,
That half incloses this retreat, I left them.
Rous'd from the fear, with which it was congeal'd
As in a frost, the country pours amain.
The spirit of our ancestors is up,
The spirit of the Free ! and with a voice
That breathes success, they all demand their king.

ALFRED.

Quick, let us join them, and improve their ardor.

We

We cannot be too hasty to secure
The glances of occasion.

S C E N E *the last.*

To them CORIN, EMMA, *kneeling to* ALFRED.

CORIN.
Good my Liege,
Pardon the poor unequal entertainment,
Which we, unknowing—

ALFRED.
Rise, my honest shepherd.
I came to thee a peasant, not a prince :

Thy rural entertainment was sincere,
Plain, hospitable, kind : such as, I hope,
Will ever mark the manners of this nation.
You friendly lodg'd me, when by all deserted :
And shall have ample recompense.

CORIN.
One boon,
Is all I crave.

ALFRED.
Good shepherd, speak thy wish.

CORIN.

CORIN.

Permission, in your wars, to serve your Grace :
 For tho here lost in solitary shades,
 A simple swain, I bear an *English* heart :
 A heart that burns with rage to see those *Danes*,
 Those foreign ruffians, those inhuman pirates,
 Oft our inferiors prov'd, thus lord it o'er us.

ALFRED.

Brave countryman, come on. 'Tis such as thou,
 Who from affection serve, and free-born zeal,
 To guard whate'er is dear and sacred to them,
 That are a king's best honor and defence.

EMMA sings the following S O N G.

1.

If those, who live in shepherd's bower,

Press not the rich and stately bed:

The new-mown hay and breathing flower

A softer couch beneath them spread.

2.

If those, who sit at shepherd's board,

Soothe not their taste by wanton art ;

They take what nature's gift afford,

And take it with a chearful heart.

3. If

3.

*If those, who drain the shepherd's bowl,
 No high and sparkling wines can boast ;
 With wholesome cups they cheer the soul,
 And crown them with the village toast.*

4.

*If those, who join in shepherd's sport,
 Gay-dancing on the daizy'd ground,
 Have not the splendor of a court ;
 Yet love adorns the merry round.*

ALFRED.

My lov'd *Eltruda* ! thou shalt here remain,
 With gentle *Emma*, and this reverend hermit.
 Ye silver streams, that murmuring wind around
 This dusky spot, to you I trust my all !
 O close around her, woods ! for her, ye vales,
 Throw forth your flowers, your softest lap diffuse !

And *Thou* ! whose secret and expansive hand
 Moves all the springs of this vast universe :
 Whose government astonishes ; who here,
 In a few hours, beyond our utmost hope,
 Beyond our thought, yet doubting, hast clear'd up
 The storm of fate : preserve what thy kind will,

Thy

Thy bountiful appointment, makes so dear
 To human hearts! preserve my queen and children!
 Preserve the hopes of *England*! while I go
 To finish thy great work, and save my country.

ELTRUDA.

Go, pay the debt of honor to the public.
 If ever woman, *Alfred*, lov'd her husband
 More fondly than herself, I claim that virtue,
 That heart-felt happiness. Yet, by our loves
 I swear, that in a glorious death with thee
 I rather would be wrapt, than live long years
 To charm thee from the rugged paths of honor:
 So much I think thee born for beauteous deeds,
 And the bright course of glory.

ALFRED.

Matchless woman!

Love, at thy voice, is kindled to ambition.
 Be this my dearest triumph, to approve me
 A husband worthy of the best *Eltruda*!

HERMIT.

Behold, my lord, our venerable Bard,
 Aged and blind, him whom the Muses favour.
 Yet ere you go, in our lov'd country's praise,
 That noblest theme, hear what his rapture breathes.

An

An ODE.

I.

*When Britain first, at heaven's command,
 Arose from out the azure main;
 This was the charter of the land,
 And guardian Angels sung this strain:
 "Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
 "Britons never will be slaves."*

2.

*The nations, not so blest as thee,
 Must, in their turns, to tyrants fall:
 While thou shalt flourish great and free,
 The dread and envy of them all.
 "Rule, &c."*

3.

*Still more majestic shalt thou rise,
 More dreadful, from each foreign stroke:
 As the loud blast that tears the skies,
 Serves but to root thy native oak.
 "Rule, &c."*

4. Thee

4.

*Thee haughty tyrants ne'er shall tame:
 All their attempts to bend thee down,
 Will but arouse thy generous flame;
 But work their woe, and thy renown.
 " Rule, &c.*

5.

*To thee belongs the rural reign;
 Thy cities shall with commerce shine:
 All thine shall be the subject main,
 And every shore it circles thine.
 Rule, &c.*

6.

*The muses, still with freedom found,
 Shall to thy happy coast repair:
 Blest isle! with matchless beauty crown'd,
 And manly hearts to guard the fair.
 " Rule, Britannia, rule the waves:
 " Britons never will be slaves.*

HERMIT.

*Alfred, go forth! lead on the radiant years,
 To thee reveal'd in vision.—Lo! they rise!
 Lo! patriots, heroes, sages, croud to birth:
 And bards to sing them in immortal verse!
 I see thy commerce, Britain, grasp the world:*

All

All nations serve thee ; every foreign flood,
Subjected pays its tribute to the *Thames*.
Thither the golden South obedient pours
His funny treasures : thither the soft East
Her spices, delicacies, gentle gifts :
And thither his rough trade the stormy North.
See, where beyond the vast *Atlantic* surge,
By boldest keels untouch'd, a dreadful space !
Shores, yet unfound, arise ! in youthful prime,
With towering forests, mighty rivers crown'd !
These stoop to *Britain's* thunder. This new world,
Shook to its centre, trembles at her name :
And there her sons, with aim exalted, sow
The seeds of rising empire, arts, and arms.

Britons, proceed, the subject Deep command,
Awe with your navies every hostile land.
Vain are their threats, their armies all are vain :
They rule the balanc'd world, who rule the main.

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